

St. John's Episcopal Church

JEFFERSON STREET AT ELM AVENUE

P.O. BOX 257
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 24002

TELEPHONE: 343-9341

April 27, 1987

Mr. W. Robert Herbert
Manager, City of Roanoke
215 Church Avenue, S.W.
Roanoke, Virginia 24011

Dear Bob:

Enclosed you will find the final report of the Task Force on the Homeless. The entire Task Force joins me in thanking you for giving us the opportunity to serve our city in this way. We present our findings and recommendations to you with full awareness of the complexity of the task which lies ahead as we seek to alleviate the anxiety and suffering of the homeless people in our midst. We pledge ourselves to work toward the fulfillment of that goal. This means that we see our report as only a beginning. We commend you for taking this initial step for our city and we hope to see exciting results of this study in the years to come.

Sincerely,



The Reverend Clay H. Turner

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enc.

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NO PLACE TO CALL HOME

PROLOGUE

In undertaking the study of the homeless situation in the Roanoke Valley, the Task Force has endeavored throughout its work to move beyond numbers and percentages toward the development of an understanding of the issue of housing from the standpoint of its human dimensions. We have become aware that housing has profound personal meanings which dramatically enhance or diminish a person's quality of life. Housing provides warmth, security, privacy, a sense of belonging, a location in society, a permanent address, one's own bedroom and kitchen and bathroom, community acceptance, environmental cleanliness, continuity, closets, running water and working windows and doors -- in sum, a sense of having a home. We have discovered that just as the matter of housing is a complex of meanings, so, too, the resolution to the problem of being without housing is complex and complicated. There is no single solution to this problem. The answers to the social and human problems of homelessness will be varied and vast and will demand many resources, both financial and personal, from our community. If any person suffers from homelessness, we all suffer. Those of us who are privileged to have a place to call home are challenged to provide this basic ingredient of being human to all our neighbors. We cannot rest until all our fellow citizens have their place to call home.

We have become aware that in an affluent society such as ours homelessness is absurd. Homelessness is unnecessary. Homelessness is unconscionable. Homelessness is hell. Homelessness is dereliction -- frostbitten toes, crooked and lost fingers, burning, bleary eyes with bad vision and a pair of drug-store glasses to mask the shame and blindness of being homeless. In so many ways to be without a home is to be nowhere in society and to be without an

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is for the benefit of the homeless and potentially homeless in our community, and of the many public and private agencies named in it, without whose cooperation it would not have been possible. Special gratitude is expressed to the administration of the City of Roanoke, whose faith in the work of this Task Force has been the inspiration of the study. We wish to acknowledge the roles that the Advisory Board of Human Resources and the Human Resources Steering Committee played in first articulating the community's concern for the homeless. We also extend special thanks to Corinne Gott, Superintendent of Roanoke City Department of Social Services, and H. Daniel Pollock, Housing Development Coordinator of Roanoke City's Building Department, for their assistance and technical support, and to Janet Y. Terry, Office Manager of the Council of Community Services for her timely clerical support. Finally, we wish to extend special appreciation and gratitude to the many citizens of Roanoke who shared their feelings, concerns, experiences and ideas with us during the course of the study.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City Manager's Task Force on Housing and Homelessness was appointed in December, 1986 to carry out a study of the needs of the homeless in Roanoke, following a request made by Mayor Noel C. Taylor in his 1986 State-of-the-City address. The twelve member task force conducted a four month study of the emergency shelter and permanent low-cost housing needs in Roanoke, by collecting its own data, studying existing data and consulting both affected citizens and agencies which serve them.

The Task Force concerned itself with two different client populations: those adults and their dependents who rely on shelters to alleviate temporary and chronic homelessness; and those individuals and families who, by virtue of their financial position and other personal circumstances, find themselves unable to afford and maintain decent housing or who are at risk of losing housing due to the personal and economic stresses of their everyday lives.

The Task Force determined that there are at least 177 people in Roanoke who are homeless and rely on emergency shelters for housing. The largest segment of this group is single men, many suffering from chronic alcoholism and drug abuse or mental illness. However, there has been an increase over the past few years in the numbers of families and young adults that are homeless. Despite the efforts of local shelter agencies there are not enough shelter beds to provide safe, adequate shelter year-round for these chronically homeless individuals. Therefore a major recommendation of this study is that the community should increase its emergency shelter bed space by the winter of 1987 so that there are enough beds to meet the demand for shelter, and that they are provided in safe, clean and adequate facilities. Other recommendations made regarding services

identity . . . to become a nobody, a non-person. No human being should suffer such a plight, be he young or old, male or female, married or single. We pledge ourselves to free these sufferers in our midst from their inhumane condition. To that end, we present the results of our study and assert our recommendations in the fervent hope that people in both the private and public sectors of our community will join together to alleviate this devastating human condition.

The Task Force on Housing and Homelessness
April 29, 1987

The members of the Task Force recognize that the problems of housing and homelessness are complex, and solutions require short and long range efforts by both the private sector and government at all levels. The recommendations made in the study are therefore designed to encourage immediate efforts and gradual but steady changes to assure safe, adequate housing for all of our citizens.

for the chronically homeless include: the establishment of a comprehensive day facility, the establishment of at least one transitional housing facility within the next year, increased effort to coordinate services to the homeless, and increased advocacy and outreach efforts by agencies which serve special populations among the homeless.

The Task Force estimates that there are 14,757 households in the Roanoke Valley whose incomes are near or below poverty level guidelines, but only about 4,653 housing units for which federal subsidies are available. This means that as many as 10,104 households are at risk of homelessness because of the high proportion of income they must commit to housing. Those at particular risk include minimum or part-time wage earners, single women with children, the mentally ill, ex-offenders, the disabled and the elderly. These households need housing subsidies or decent low-cost housing and an array of social services to make up for their chronic lack of money. These needed services include child care, job training and employment assistance, transportation, emergency financial assistance, and low-cost health care.

The Task Force recommendations regarding services for the at-risk population include: the establishment of more free or minimal cost child care, transitional residential services for special needs groups, increased public or subsidized housing, expanded home maintenance programs, changes in utility company billing practices, involvement by the business community, and increased, coordinated involvement by local religious congregations.

Finally, the Task Force also recommends the establishment of a community foundation to solicit private dollars to meet the community's long-term housing needs identified in the study, as well as an array of policy and procedural recommendations for local governments.

HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

In his 1986 State-of-the-City Address Mayor Noel C. Taylor focused on the plight of the homeless and the street people of Roanoke and recommended that the City's Department of Human Resources conduct a study to determine how the City might be involved in meeting the needs of the homeless. The City's Human Resources Steering Committee earlier had formed a subcommittee to study various aspects of the housing problem in the Roanoke area, with a particular focus on the needs of special populations such as the elderly, the deinstitutionalized and low-income families. However, no in-depth studies had been conducted in Roanoke to address the specific needs of the homeless or at-risk individual in regard to housing; nor had there been any comprehensive study to assess the adequacy of existing temporary shelter or permanent low-cost housing.

Therefore, the City Manager W. Robert Herbert appointed a citizen task force to examine this problem. Director of Human Resources James D. Ritchie was named as Staff Coordinator to the Task Force on Housing and Homelessness (hereinafter referred to as the "Task Force"). The Council of Community Services was hired to provide coordination and technical assistance to the project.

WHO ARE THE HOMELESS?

Those who are homeless may be so for a night or for many years. They are young and old, alone or with a family, male and female. During the course of this study members of the Task Force spoke with many individuals, including the following persons:

- A husband and wife in their late teens arrive in town from a nearby state with their six-week-old baby. They have left an area high in unemployment and come to Roanoke seeking work with no resources other than the small amount of cash in their pockets. They don't know where they will stay tomorrow.
- A friendly sociable 78-year-old man says that he prefers to live in his car in a city park rather than live in a permanent apartment. A local convenience store offers him shelter during the worst months of winter weather.
- A chronic alcoholic stays at the Salvation Army shelter when he is on a drinking binge because he says that his family objects to his drinking.
- A young man returns to his home community after serving time in prison. Although only marginally literate and having few marketable job skills, he is ineligible for many social services and lacks the credit references and deposits to get an apartment.
- A mother of two school age children moves out of an abusive home into an efficiency motel room because she does not have enough money saved up to afford an apartment and furnishings. She calls the Information and Referral Center for help when her car breaks down because she can not pay her motel bill and repair her car.
- A fifty-year-old woman is released from a state hospital and answers ad after ad for apartments but is repeatedly rejected as a tenant. She finally finds housing in a subsidized housing facility.
- A moderately retarded woman in her twenties lives at home with her family but worries about who will take care of her after her parents die.
- A family from a neighboring state is told by friends that Roanoke is a good place to find work. They sell their car and use all their money on rent. The man has a part-time job but the family is now living split up between men's and women's shelters.
- An incoherent, obviously mentally ill middle-aged man is unable to complete a conversation with a visitor to a local shelter but says he wanders around the country.
- Men and women who pay their entire General Relief checks to a single-room-occupancy boarding house rely on the shelters to provide meals and clothing. They have no other income.

Definition of Terms: Who Are the Homeless?

In carrying out its appointed mission the Task Force had to define and describe those individuals and families who comprise the homeless and at-risk populations of the City of Roanoke. While not scientific or absolute, the following working definitions were adopted.

THE HOMELESS ARE CONSIDERED TO BE THOSE PERSONS OVER THE AGE OF 18 WHO RELY ON EMERGENCY/TEMPORARY SHELTER TO ALLEVIATE THEIR TEMPORARY OR CHRONIC STATE OF HOMELESSNESS. There are two distinct groups within this definition. The first consists of the so-called "street people," predominately single males who cannot or will not pay for overnight lodging, a number of whom suffer from alcohol or chemical dependency or varying degrees of mental illness. Street people also include those unemployed or unemployable individuals who are able to afford rooms in homes for adults or low-cost downtown apartments and hotels because of public benefits but who spend their days on the streets. These groups include both residents of Roanoke and people who are migrating to or through Roanoke. The second homeless group consists of those persons and family groups which, due to personal or financial crises, lose their housing. Those individuals are considered transitionally homeless.

INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS ARE THOSE PEOPLE WHO, BY VIRTUE OF THEIR FINANCIAL POSITION AND OTHER PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES (e.g., SINGLE-PARENTHOOD, MINIMUM OR SUB-MINIMUM WAGE INCOME, DISABILITY, OLD AGE, MENTAL ILLNESS), FIND THEMSELVES EITHER UNABLE TO AFFORD AND/OR MAINTAIN DECENT HOUSING, BECAUSE THEY MUST USE AN INAPPROPRIATE PROPORTION OF THEIR INCOME TO MAINTAIN HOUSING OR ARE AT CONSTANT RISK OF LOSING HOUSING BECAUSE OF THE PERSONAL AND ECONOMIC STRESSES OF THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES.

In Roanoke, as around the country, there is considerable debate about how many homeless "street people" there are, who they are, and how accurate

any count of them can be. As the vignettes which preface this section show, the homeless have many faces and many stories. An individual who is homeless finds himself or herself denied one of the most basic elements of self-esteem and social status, namely a dwelling place which provides safety and security, a sense of permanence, and a feeling of belonging to a neighborhood and a community. Parents of homeless families' own sense of inadequacy and frustration regarding their inability to provide for their children is accentuated by community sanctions against "unfit" parents. Similarly, a resident of sub-standard rental housing or someone doubling up with friends or relatives in violation of occupancy codes or rules regarding public assistance, foregoes the civic right to complain to the appropriate authorities because the exercise of that right would likely lead to eviction.

The Task Force is cautious about presenting absolute numbers of affected individuals. The numbers offered in the description of findings are approximations which were derived by comparing data from a variety of sources. The Task Force believes that this cross-referencing of sources and the delineation between the different client groups have enabled it to present sound estimates of the numbers of people facing present or possible homelessness in the City of Roanoke.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

A twelve-member citizen task force was appointed by the City Manager, and staff coordination and assistance was provided by the Director of Human Resources, members of his staff and departments, and the Council of Community Services. The Task Force met for the first time on December 5, 1986 and was given approximately four months to complete its work.

The Task Force decided that the study should include both an analysis of the needs of homeless persons and an analysis of the needs of those individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness by virtue of their income and personal circumstances. The rationale for making a distinction between these groups was that, while some individuals and families might fall into both categories at some point in time (e.g., a family is displaced into emergency shelter because of loss of a home due to unemployment), the Task Force felt that there was a significant distinction between those individuals who chronically rely on emergency shelter services and those whose housing problems were mainly due to temporary economic crises and for whom emergency shelter was not an appropriate solution. (For a more detailed client description see "Findings", page 14, below.)

The Task Force divided its study efforts into two parts: data collection and analysis, and development of conclusions and recommendations. To expedite data collection and analysis the Task Force divided into two subcommittees, one focusing on needs and resources relating to street people and emergency/-temporary shelter, and a second focusing on low-income individuals at risk of homelessness and the resources available to them. The subcommittees worked independently at data collection, but members of one subcommittee often attended the other's sessions. The goals and activities of each subcommittee are outlined below.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY/TEMPORARY SHELTER

This subcommittee was responsible for answering the following questions:

- Who are the homeless in need of temporary or emergency shelter (how many, what are their demographic characteristics)?
- What services are currently available to them, and what is the quality and quantity of these services?
- What are the gaps between available services and existing needs? If there are gaps, are they likely to expand or contract over the next five or ten years?
- Are there service models in other communities which might better address the needs of Roanoke's emergency shelter population?
- What services besides direct shelter are needed to adequately address the problem of temporary homelessness in Roanoke? Are these services already in existence? Is the system coordinated?
- Who, in terms of key service providers and funding bodies, is, or needs to be, involved in this issue?

To determine the answers to these questions the subcommittee:

- Visited all shelters to view the facilities, and spoke with both staff and residents;
- Interviewed clients at some non-shelter agencies to determine their risk of becoming homeless and to listen to their concerns and fears relating to homelessness;
- Interviewed staff from agencies who serve client groups represented among the homeless, e.g., the deinstitutionalized and veterans, (see Appendix A);
- Investigated shelter models and shelter support services in other communities;

- Conducted a one-week telephone count of shelter use, including a count of all shelters*, the public alcohol detoxification center, and the jail;
- Conducted an in-depth count of the homeless on one night, with professional staff and volunteers conducting the count and interviewing shelter residents at all shelters*, the detoxification center, the jail, and on the street; and
- Met with Congressman James Olin to investigate federal policies and programs relating to the homeless and investigated state-sponsored housing programs for shelters.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERMANENT LOW-COST HOUSING

This subcommittee was responsible for answering the following kinds of questions:

- How many low-income individuals are at risk of becoming homeless because of a lack of resources or because they live in substandard housing? What are their demographic characteristics?
- How many low-income people actually move in and out of a state of homelessness because of their economic circumstances?
- What publicly subsidized housing is available for low-income people? What restrictions apply, what are waiting lists like, what is the predicted future of federally subsidized housing?
- How do current local government policies affect the availability of low-cost housing (e.g., zoning, building codes and revitalization programs)?
- What state and federal policies have an affect on this issue in Roanoke, and what is likely to happen in the near future?

*With the exception of Justice House, which declined to participate.

To determine the answers to these questions the subcommittee:

- Held a series of public hearings in various neighborhoods around the City (see Appendix B);
- Held in-depth interviews with key agencies whose clients are at risk of homelessness due to economic or personal circumstances (see Appendix A);
- Attended group meetings of identified high-risk client groups (e.g., ex-offenders, deinstitutionalized individuals and mothers of children participating in Head Start programs);
- Met with Congressman James Olin to investigate federal policies and initiatives relating to the homeless, job training programs and the minimum wage;
- Met with City public housing officials and housing planners;
- Collected statistics on publicly subsidized housing controlled at state and federal levels and administered in neighboring locales;
- Examined census and other statistical data to determine the numbers of individuals and families potentially at risk of losing their present housing; and
- Interviewed representatives of the private real estate sector.

The Task Force subcommittees reported to the full group monthly during the data collection phase. Once this phase was completed, the Task Force met as a full group to develop its conclusions. It met once more with all representatives of emergency/temporary shelter services and with representatives of related support service organizations to verify its findings as to available services and to solicit final suggestions and recommendations from those representatives. It then developed its final recommendations and rationales through a group process.

- In terms of ages of respondents the following was found:
 - only two respondents were under the age of 21 (less than 3%);
 - thirty-nine (54%) of those surveyed were between the ages of 21 and 55; and
 - sixteen men (22% of those surveyed) were over age 55; and one man said he was 78 years old.
- In terms of residency 47 of those surveyed (65%) described themselves as Roanoke City residents, while 24 (or 33%) reported they were from some other location ranging from Roanoke County to Utah.
- Only four (4) people described themselves as transients. Three, including two men and a woman, described themselves as only passing through Roanoke, while one man said he was from Roanoke but "travels a lot".
- Only 17 (or 24%) of those surveyed reported any employment, and seven (7) of these were in the Rescue Mission's Recovery Program which provides work for participants.
- Nine people (or 12.5% of respondents), all men, reported that they had been laid off from work. All were in shelter alone, but one reported having children in foster care in another locality.
- Fifty-five people (76% of those surveyed) reported no form of income or subsidy.

Findings of the count correspond fairly well to how shelter agencies describe their populations. As detailed below, three of the four major shelter organizations provide primarily emergency/temporary shelter. They concur that their "regular" population is at least 50-60% men, with single women and families comprising the rest. They all note that the shelter population contains an increasing percentage of young to middle aged adults and families in addition to the older men (and the very few women) who have

been shelter "regulars" for years. There is general agreement that the majority of chronic shelter users have significant disabling conditions such as alcoholism and/or mental illness. There is also agreement that the stresses of homelessness and the circumstances surrounding it accentuate and add to these disabilities, just as the disabling conditions may have led to a state of homelessness. (Mental Health Services' Extended Care Program, which serves the deinstitutionalized population returned from state hospitals to this area, estimates that as many as 30 to 35% of those released do not ever seek support services from MHS' program, although it is not known how many of those individuals return to families or end up homeless.)

A small but significant proportion of the regular shelter users/street people seem to be veterans who are chronic alcoholics. A number of those men move from detoxification programs to the streets and back again. How many people fit this description is unclear, but the Veterans Administration Medical Center is also concerned about this identified segment of the homeless population and appears ready to address this "revolving door" situation.

The police patrolman who participated in the count night has eight years experience on the downtown patrol. He knew many of the "old-timers" among the homeless street people, including many by name, history, and where they slept outdoors when they could not get in the shelters. He verified shelter observations that the greater percentage of this population consists of chronically alcoholic or mentally ill men, and only a handful of single women are chronically homeless people. He also noted an increase in younger street people in recent years.

EMERGENCY/TEMPORARY SHELTER RESOURCES

There are currently four organizations offering overnight emergency/temporary housing and related on-site services. These are the Salvation Army, the City Rescue Mission, Justice House, and TRUST. These organizations are all private, non-profit; two (Salvation Army and TRUST) are United Way member agencies and three of them (City Rescue Mission, Salvation Army and Justice House) are predicated on a very specific sense of religious ministry to the people they serve. All of the shelter facilities are located in the City of Roanoke. One other organization, the Samaritan Inn, is located in the City Market area and offers day facilities and some services to street people.

It should be noted that, unlike group home facilities or homes for adults, there are no licensing standards to which shelters must adhere. They must only meet occupancy codes.

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army operates several housing programs, but its emergency/temporary shelters are Tom's Place for men and Dudley House for women and children, both located on Norfolk Avenue in Roanoke. In addition to the shelters, the Salvation Army has funds to pay for families or singles to stay in motels when its own facilities are full or inadequate to meet a family's or individual's needs.

Tom's Place is a dormitory style facility for men offering dinner, breakfast, showers and clothes to the men staying there. It is open from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. except in inclement or cold weather when it may open earlier or stay open all day. Men can stay a maximum of seven nights in a row, and a maximum of two weeks per month, except in cold weather months or especially inclement weather when an "open house" policy relaxes restrictions to keep

people off the streets. In order to stay there men must take a nightly shower and make their own beds. Men may be refused admittance for breaking house rules or for severe intoxication. Tom's Place has an occupancy rate of 24, but the Commanding Officer of the Salvation Army states it is overcrowded and ideally should not hold more than 15 people. In bad weather as many as 35 men are housed in the facility with cots and pallets providing additional bed space.

Dudley House is a shelter for women and children with room for 10 emergency shelter clients, but it has been used to house as many as 15 people in inclement weather. It is a house with four bedrooms, one of which is used by the resident managers. Rules at the women's shelter are more relaxed; women may stay a week and do not need to leave the facility during the day. In practical application of this rule, many women and their children stay much longer (as long as several months). The women, like the men, are provided with meals, clothes, and showers. Any of the shelter regulations can be and are waived by Army staff depending upon the personal circumstances of the clients.

In addition to the residential services, the Army offers a soup kitchen lunch available to anyone every day near the shelters. Virginia Employment Commission workers come five days a week to offer day labor or other jobs to shelter residents. The Army also offers counseling and spiritual guidance at its Dale Avenue Community Services facility, but clients must initiate these services and get to Dale Avenue on their own.

The Army feels that both shelters are too small to accommodate all in need. Also, it would prefer to operate the soup kitchen on site at one of the shelters but lacks the space to feed all who come for lunch.

City Rescue Mission

The City Rescue Mission operates two facilities which face each other on Tazewell Avenue. Its housing programs currently include a transient men's shelter, a family shelter for women and children which is also intended to be temporary in nature, and a recovery program for men who want to escape a life on the streets. Like the Army, the City Rescue Mission also has funds to send families or individuals to motels for short stays when the need arises.

The transient men's shelter has room for 30 men, but it has housed as many as 50 in inclement weather, using cots and pallets to make up the extra beds. The facility is dormitory style. Men can come in at 5:00 p.m. in the winter and 7:00 p.m. in the summer and stay until after breakfast (approximately 7:30 a.m.). Those who stay the night must attend chapel services and shower; they receive overnight shelter, dinner and breakfast, and clothing as needed. Generally speaking, a man may stay one night in seven at the shelter. However, from approximately October 1st to April 15th the Mission has an "open house" policy whereby an individual can stay every night, and the shelter may be open for a longer period of time in inclement weather, even all day in severe weather.

Women and children stay in a house across the street in the family shelter. At present families have to be divided between the shelters if there are a man and a woman, or an older son and a mother. This house has several bedrooms and a capacity of twelve, although more have been housed in bad weather. Clients may stay from 4:30 p.m. until 9:00 a.m. the next day, except in bad weather. A woman with small children may be permitted to stay all day. The family shelter has bathing facilities, a kitchenette and some laundry assistance. The residents of the family shelter take their meals

across the street at the main building. If women have children, they are not required to attend chapel, but if they do not have children chapel attendance is mandatory. Like the transient shelter the family shelter is intended for emergency use (one or two nights' stay). However, in special circumstances, such as a single parent trying to arrange permanent housing or someone awaiting a paycheck, people can stay indefinitely. In fact, all of the regulations of the Mission can be and are waived depending upon the personal circumstances of the clients. People may enter the Mission any time of the night if they are just released from jail or if they have just come into town. People may be refused admittance for disorderly conduct and for breaking house rules.

The Mission offers a total of six meals a day to people in its various programs, including the Recovery Program detailed in the next paragraph. In addition to its residential services, a sit-down lunch is offered to anyone, and the evening meal for all emergency shelter clients is open to all who attend chapel. In addition to its residential services the Mission has designated two days each week as times anyone may come in to shower and get a clean set of clothes.

The Mission's Recovery Program is for men trying to get off the street. It can serve 30 men at a time and is usually full with a waiting list. There is no time limit for participation in the program. The men are involved in a comprehensive program that includes free room and board, clothing, a sustenance allowance, job training and some employment assistance, religious services, spiritual guidance, and other services (e.g., medical, eyeglasses) as needed. By summer the Mission plans to have a further transitional step in place in the form of the Wells Home Place, a house which will be a residential facility for three graduates of the Recovery Program with a supervisory couple in

residence. This graduate facility will more closely approximate independent living, and, in exchange for a nominal room and board fee, the men in it will get all the services of the Recovery Program plus some time to accumulate savings and to look for permanent residence.

The Mission's board of directors has approved a plan for a major new addition to its facilities. The one million dollar addition would add a new family shelter facility which would triple existing capacity and allow families to stay together while in shelter. It will also be handicapped accessible, a feature which would fill a major gap in current shelter facilities. It would also triple the Mission's bedspace for transient men and add expanded day facilities, although no day programs are planned.

Justice House*

Justice House is located on Jamison Avenue in Southeast Roanoke. Self-described as a "hospitality house", it offers both temporary and extended/transitional shelter. It is privately operated and part of the Southeast Community Church which is affiliated with the Mennonite Church.

The shelter facilities consist of a house with 5 bedrooms and, when needed, the church building itself. The director of Justice House stated that the house has an occupancy rate of 12, but approximately 35 people reside there at any one time. (In the coldest weather House spokespersons indicated there were 50 people residing there, but no verification was possible.) The

*Justice House did not allow a complete tour of its facilities. Most of this information comes from an interview with the director and observations of Task Force members at two house meetings.

facility has a mix of residents, both male and female, single individuals and families. The house is open 24 hours a day, and there is no limit to the length of stay. Eligibility is determined by the director. People residing there can get room and board, showers, meals, pastoral services, clothing and some counseling on-site, and the director provides assistance in linking people with other community services. Justice House has refused admittance to people when they lacked space and because of intoxication or severe behavior problems.

TRUST

TRUST is a non-sectarian United Way agency which provides volunteer counseling and emergency shelter services. It will be moving to a house on Elm Avenue in early May. It provides one night temporary shelter (and on rare occasions two nights of shelter), kitchen facilities, bathing facilities, and vouchers for purchasing food at a nearby store. Clients can also receive counseling and referral assistance, and access to a washer and dryer. The residential quarters consist of bedrooms and pull-out sofas in the living area. TRUST can house 8 to 10 people per night.

Guests are generally restricted to one night's stay per month. There are no set check-in or check-out times. Clients using drugs or alcohol, those who are actively psychotic, in need of medical attention, or who have previously abused house rules may not be accepted for shelter.

Samaritan Inn

The Samaritan Inn is located on Campbell Avenue in the Market Area. It is a daytime facility for the street people of the downtown area. It is open several hours a day (most of the day in the colder months) and provides food, clothing, and spiritual support and education to its clients. It is, in

essence, the personal religious mission of one individual with volunteer support and is not an incorporated organization. The Samaritan Inn is facing increasing resistance from its retail business neighbors and will have to find another facility when its lease runs out in the summer of 1987. The continued operation of the Samaritan Inn is in doubt at this time.

PERMANENT/LOW-COST HOUSING

POPULATIONS AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

Who are the individuals and families at risk of losing their housing? They are people who, by virtue of their financial position and other personal circumstances, find themselves either unable to afford and/or maintain decent housing because they must use an inappropriate proportion of their income to maintain housing or are at constant risk of losing housing because of the personal and economic stresses of their everyday lives. Specifically, these people may be working at minimum wage or part-time jobs, female heads of households with children, disabled, deinstitutionalized from mental health or corrections facilities, or elderly. Their immediate and long-term needs may include ongoing financial subsidies, emergency financial assistance, low cost permanent housing, and support services such as financial counseling, job training, child care, and transportation. They are often acutely at risk due to temporary financial problems, changes in employment status, illness or injury, and changes in their life circumstances.

While at-risk groups may have particular personal or social circumstances which place them in jeopardy, the basic reason people are at risk of homelessness is a lack of money. Most agencies which have income eligibility guidelines use as a standard federal poverty guidelines (household income at or below 125% of established figures).* According to U.S. Census data updated to 1985 levels by the Virginia Department of Social Services, there are 24,866 persons

*U.S. government figures place the poverty level at \$5,469 for an individual and at \$10,989 for a family of four.

living in Roanoke City, 10,043 persons in Roanoke County/Salem, and 3,429 persons in Botetourt County who are at or below 125% of poverty income levels.

To determine how many households are at risk of homelessness, the estimated number of poverty level households was compared with the number of available subsidized housing units in each locality. See Table 1. (For a complete discussion of subsidized housing, see page 38.)

Six thousand and sixty-eight (6,068) households are at risk in Roanoke City, 2,812 households in Roanoke County/Salem are at risk, and 1,224 households in Botetourt County are at risk. It is also apparent from Table 1 that subsidized housing is available in the home locality for only 39 percent of Roanoke City's low-income families, for only 22 percent of Roanoke County/Salem's low-income families, and for none of Botetourt County's low-income families. Overall, less than one-third of the eligible households in these localities are currently being served by assisted housing. Stated another way, more than two-thirds of the Valley's poverty level households are at risk of homelessness. The same proportion of at-risk low-income households has been identified in a report on homelessness in 25 cities nationwide. (See The Continued Growth of Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty in America's Cities: 1986. United States Conference of Mayors, December 1986.)

TABLE 1

AT RISK HOUSEHOLDS

Locality	# of Low-Income Households (1)	# of Subsidized Housing Units (2)	# Households At Risk (3)
Roanoke City	9,946	3,878	6,068
Roanoke County/Salem	3,587	775	2,812
Botetourt County	1,224	- 0 -	1,224
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTALS:	14,757	4,653	10,104

(1) Based on 1980 population at 125% of poverty guidelines; Census data updated by Virginia Department of Social Services to 1985 figures. Population data divided by average persons per household as estimated by Census (2.5 for Roanoke City; 2.8 for Roanoke County/Salem, and 2.8 for Botetourt County) to give approximate number of low-income households per locality.

(2) Including local government administered units, current and expected, and privately secured Section 8 and 236 units.

(3) Derived by subtracting (2) from (1).

Within the general group of those with limited economic resources there are some specific populations which share personal or social circumstances which place them at a distinct disadvantage as they seek to maintain themselves in the community. The Task Force held a series of public hearings and met with some members of these groups, as well as with agencies which address the special needs of these individuals. The findings on these specific at-risk groups are detailed here.

Minimum Wage Earners and Part-time Workers Employed at One Job

Since 1981 the minimum wage has remained at \$3.35 per hour equalling \$6,968 annually if a person is employed fulltime. The poverty line for a single individual is \$5,469; a family of four must make over \$10,989 to be above the poverty line. Part-time workers comprise approximately 25 percent of the work force, and, on average, earn less per hour than full-time employees. According to recent government figures, part-time workers nationally earn \$4.17 hourly compared to an average of \$7.05 for full time workers. Approximately one-half of the part-time workers do not have health insurance coverage and 70 percent lack a retirement plan at work. (See Business Week, December 15, 1986, p.52.)

Congress is considering increasing the minimum wage, but it is not expected that the increase would amount to more than fifty cents per hour. Such an adjustment will do little to ease the financial strains of the minimum wage earner. The Roanoke City Department of Social Services estimates that a wage earner in Roanoke needs to earn about \$5.50 per hour in order to afford unsubsidized housing and other basic necessities. Even at \$5.50 an hour an individual would still be subject to the risk of homelessness as a result of an

economic emergency like the loss of a car, if he or she had no resources such as family support to rely on for temporary financial assistance.

People at these income levels are, therefore, likely to live in substandard housing. This finding is supported by the June, 1986 Roanoke Valley Needs Assessment prepared for United Way of Roanoke Valley, Inc. The Needs Assessment indicates that about 30 percent of sampled households in the downtown Roanoke City neighborhoods, that is, Southeast, Old Southwest and inner Northwest, agreed with the statement, "The place where you live needs a lot of repair work." The rate of agreement rose to 38 percent among poverty level households.

Single Women with Children: Aid to Dependent Children Recipients

Local service agencies such as the Presbyterian Community Center and Total Action Against Poverty report that, more than any other group, women with children are seeking housing and emergency financial assistance. In December, 1986 there were 1,802 mothers with children receiving Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) from Roanoke City Department of Social Services. The average payment in Roanoke is \$291.00 per month for a family of three. (The average ADC family has 2.7 members.) It was the consensus of those agency representatives and clients interviewed that ADC payments are not adequate to support a family's living expenses. Often these mothers receive other sources of supplemental income such as Food Stamps and Medicaid. However, the combined benefits from ADC and these additional subsidies do not meet poverty income levels. Health insurance is a critical issue for this population. Because an ADC recipient is also covered by Medicaid, she is often better off than if she were employed full time with no health benefits.

Securing rental housing is difficult for this population. Problems frequently incurred include landlords refusing to rent to ADC families because of previous problems with other ADC recipients, long waiting lists for public housing, limited availability of Section 8 certificates, and the prevalence of substandard private housing in the price range of such families. Once housing is secured, they are faced with making ends meet with limited financial resources. A higher-than-usual electric bill or an unexpected medical expense may force these families to seek emergency financial assistance or to decide which bills will not be paid. Eviction for non-payment of rent may result.

Deinstitutionalized Individuals

Housing is a critically important issue for the individual who will be released from a private or state mental health facility. To identify the needs and issues of this population, Task Force members interviewed several professional and client representatives of Mental Health Services. It found that the needs of the chronically mentally ill are similar to the needs of the elderly; that is, this population requires an array of readily accessible support services to function in the community. While the exact disposition of everyone released to this area from mental health facilities is unknown, the Task Force determined that 501 people were released to the Roanoke area from state hospitals in F.Y. 1985-86. Many who receive community mental health services have trouble affording and keeping housing, and 30 to 35 percent of all who return to the community do not seek out the counseling and medication supervision that would optimize their chances for maintaining themselves with family or alone.

The problem of housing for these people is three-fold: they have chronic psychiatric conditions which limit their ability to live independently and which may require periods of hospitalization; they have very limited financial

resources; and they face great social prejudice. The key to successful community living for these individuals is to manage their stress levels. Anyone is more susceptible to stress with inadequate housing, few support services and little money. Someone with low psychological tolerance for stress is even worse off. Frequent housing changes place additional stress on the individual. Supported, supervised apartment living works very well for these people but is in critically short supply.

The Task Force also met with members of Mental Health Services' Mountain House Clubhouse, a support group for individuals released from state mental institutions. It was noted that several are eligible for income programs such as Supplemental Security Income, General Relief, and Medicare. Many have been frustrated in their attempts to find housing, and several have lived on the street. Patients leaving mental hospitals who are not returning to their families usually enter a home for adults. These privately owned and operated facilities offer shelter and meals, plus supervision of personal care and medication. Those individuals determined eligible by local social service departments may receive auxiliary grants up to a state mandated ceiling for their residence in the home, plus a small personal allowance. These funds are paid directly to the home operators. Roanoke is said to rank second in the state in the number of beds in such homes, though it is fourteenth in population. The existence of this many adult home beds has resulted in many placements from other localities, as well as from the entire Valley. At present adult homes are the only type of housing for disabled persons directly subsidized by the state and local money.* This results in a disincentive for the

*Auxillary grants are made by the local social service department. Eighty percent of the monthly fee is paid by the State and the remaining 20 percent is paid by the social service department of the individual's original home community.

development of residences offering the possibility of less dependency by residents and the teaching of life skills to promote independent living.

Burrell Home for Adults, the largest adult home in the area with 206 beds, has announced that it is planning to phase out its operation. As there appears to be a need for other levels of care between the complete care of adult homes and independent living, the relocation of the present residents may offer an opportunity to consider alternative residential transitional programs for those who seem ready for specialized services.

Ex-offenders

To determine the needs and issues of this population, the Task Force met with members of Virginia Cares ex-offenders support group. The biggest housing problems faced by ex-offenders are a lack of money for adequate housing, a lack of references, and a poor credit history. Parolees are turned back to the community with just \$25.00 which is barely enough to rent a room for one night. Therefore, unless they have supportive families or friends, they are immediately thrown into the emergency services system. The group agreed that more low-income, subsidized units are needed and that credit standards for housing should be lowered for special circumstances. Temporary or transitional or transitional residential facilities for ex-offenders which would give them time to adjust to society as well as a sense of security were strongly recommended by members and Virginia Cares' staff.*

*The Salvation Army operates a pre-release program for prison inmates who are scheduled for release from the state prison system which is intended to help with this transition; however, the program is limited in scope and size.

People with Disabilities

To determine the housing needs of people with disabilities the Task Force interviewed a representative of the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS). The DRS client population includes individuals with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. Appropriate housing is critical to the success of the rehabilitation process. According to DRS staff, groups most in need of housing are the emotionally disturbed and substance abusers. The general need is for affordable, furnished, accessible apartments or rooming situations.

The financial concerns of the disabled are similar to those of other identified groups. General Relief, a subsidy provided through local social services departments, is not adequate to cover the cost of available housing. (Maximum General Relief in the City is \$145 per month.) If DRS provides financial assistance to a General Relief recipient, the amount given is subtracted from the individual's General Relief subsidy (except for Title VI participants).

The primary need for the physically, mentally and emotionally disabled appears to be transitional subsidized housing which provides a supportive environment with varying levels of supervision. It should be noted that "transitional" implies that there is something to move to, so affordable permanent housing is still a critical concern of this population.

The Elderly

In the City of Roanoke 25 percent of the population or approximately 25,000 people are 60 years of age or older. The 1980 Census reported that the incomes of 5,364 householders in Roanoke City over the age of 65 were at or

below federal poverty income levels. Many elderly people "wear out" housing because they are unable physically and/or economically to maintain or repair their residences. In a recent survey conducted by the League of Older Americans, single female homeowners were found to experience the greatest difficulty with minor repair problems. The average age of that group of respondents (72 years) was cited as a factor. The average length of residence in the same house (approximately 26 years) indicates that this group's housing was built prior to 1960 and could be expected to require repair due to deterioration brought on by age and usage. (See "League of Older Americans, Inc., Senior Housing Report, February 1987.")

Low-cost housing facilities for the elderly have been constructed in recent years. However, the newest of these, Edinburgh Square, has a waiting list of 200 people. Overall, the occupancy rate for major retirement living facilities in the Valley is 99.1 percent, indicating a trend of the elderly to move out of private residences as space in such facilities becomes available.

HOUSING RESOURCES

People who earn low wages, receive public subsidies or who have special personal or social circumstances which place them in the at-risk category need two things to get and maintain stable housing: the housing itself and support services, including access to financial aid. Housing for this group of people includes private, affordable residences and subsidized units where part of the rent for the units is paid by the federal government. Support services can include job training and placement assistance, case work and case management services, medical care, transportation, day care and financial aid and counseling. Available and needed housing and support services are discussed separately below.

Low Cost Housing

The Private Sector

As with any consumer item, the reasonableness of the cost of housing is directly related to one's income. There are some generally accepted standards of cost for housing. The cost for basic housing, excluding taxes and utilities, should not exceed 25 percent of one's gross income. In terms of rental property in this region, the fair market price for a two-bedroom apartment including utilities, is figured at \$360.00 per month.

For persons living on public subsidy or minimum wage, securing housing in the private sector is very difficult. A woman with two children living on Aid to Dependent Children receives only \$291.00 per month in assistance, \$69.00 less than the average cost of a two-bedroom apartment. A person earning minimum wage, approximately \$6,968.00 a year, would expend 62 percent of his or her earnings on such housing.

Government housing policies have been geared in the past few years towards the elimination of substandard housing in an effort to see that all local citizens have decent housing, but such policies have an unexpected negative impact on the low-income individual. For example, as poor quality housing has been identified in the City, a strong effort has been made either to assist the owner in rehabilitation of the unit or, if that is no longer reasonable, to see that it is condemned and torn down. In either case the low-income tenant is likely to lose, since rehabilitated housing can be rented at a higher rate, thus forcing the low-income tenant out, or there will be one less structure available to the low-income person seeking housing. No one wants to see people living in substandard conditions, and yet no one wants to see people living on the streets because they cannot find a place to rent. This is one very real public policy dilemma.

People in low-cost private housing are also, by virtue of the limited supply of housing choices, more at risk of sharp-dealing landlords or others who would take advantage of them. Locally there has been recent media attention on "rent to own" practices where renters have paid money to a landlord, believing that they were paying off the equivalent of a mortgage. Such payments provide no equity in the home, and a missed payment may result in eviction as in the case of any other rental property. In these arrangements maintenance becomes the responsibility of the tenant who, because of lack of income, may be unable to prevent the structure from becoming substandard. Landlords who own fewer than eight rental units are not covered by the Virginia Tenant Landlord Act, which means that tenants in such units have limited recourse if the property is not properly maintained.

Finally, new federal tax laws are expected to have a negative effect on the availability of low-cost rental property as property owners raise rents in order to make up for their reduced tax benefits from such ownership.

Habitat for Humanity is one group that is seeking to expand the private housing stock for low-income people. This non-profit Christian ministry is part of an international organization whose goal is to build modest, energy efficient homes utilizing volunteer effort and donated materials, and to make these homes available for purchase by low-income families through low down payments and interest free mortgages. Eligible families are expected to contribute a minimum of 300 hours of labor towards constructing their house and are selected on the basis of their financial and housing needs. The homes are expected to cost between \$20,000 and \$25,000, and two are currently under construction in Northwest Roanoke.

Subsidized Housing

Subsidized housing programs are offered by both the federal government through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and by the State of Virginia through the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Virginia Housing Development Authority. Subsidies are offered to increase low-cost housing through several routes including tax-exempt financing for rental units, low-cost mortgages, assistance with home repair and energy improvements and direct subsidies for low-income renters.

The three rental subsidy programs available in the Roanoke area are so-called Section 8 and Section 236 subsidized housing*, and public housing in the City of Roanoke offered by the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority (R.R.H.A.).

*Section 8 of the Revised U.S. Housing Act of 1937 and Section 236, which replaced Section 221D3 of the same Act in 1968.

Section 8 is federally subsidized housing. A tenant living in Section 8 housing pays a portion of the fair market value of the unit based on income; the difference is made up by either the local public housing authority or by the Virginia Housing Development Authority if there is no local authority. Section 8 certificates are presented to private landlords with units in various areas which generally speaking, rent for less than \$400 per month for a two-bedroom apartment. Realtors may also qualify for other Section 8 or Section 236 development and rehabilitation monies by agreeing that new or rehabilitated units will be used to house low-income renters. Under Section 236 the tenant pays approximately 25 percent of his/her total income to live in designated units. The income limits for both Section 8 and Section 236 range from \$10,150 for one person to \$15,650 for a family of five. There are approximately 1,923 of these privately owned, federally subsidized units in the Roanoke Valley, including 25 Section 8 certificates which have been allocated to, but not yet received by, Roanoke County.

The Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority is the only public housing authority in our region. In addition to administering the various Section 8 rental and rehabilitation programs, totaling approximately 1,211 existing and projected units, it also offers publicly run, subsidized housing through approximately 1,515 units at ten public housing sites and 47 scattered housing sites throughout the City. (See Table 2, page 41.) As noted above, public housing is presently available only in the City and only to City residents, although residency requirements are minimal and easily established. Preference is given first to elderly disabled veterans, second to the elderly disabled (317 units are in high-rises specifically designated for the elderly), and

then to disaster victims and people living in condemned housing. Others are accepted on a space available basis. The current waiting list for public housing is around 800 families all of whom have been found to be eligible, with most waiting for two bedroom (410 families) and one bedroom (291 families) apartments. There are approximately 722 people on the Section 8 certificate waiting list.

Although RRHA views all subsidized housing as being equal in value to tenants, interviews with individuals living in subsidized housing revealed that Section 8 certificate housing is considered far more desirable for families with children because it permits tenants to move into established neighborhoods and away from the concentrated low income population and the "bad influences" perceived in the publicly run housing projects. Movement from the latter into Section 8 certificate units is hindered by a priority waiting list system of RRHA which considers public housing tenants to have low priority for Section 8 certificates because they are already receiving a subsidy. This means that, in effect, it is very unlikely that public housing tenants would "graduate" to more socially constructive Section 8 certificate housing unless they first moved back into private unsubsidized low-cost housing. To do so would be to place themselves at risk of homelessness in the event of economic crisis.

TABLE 2
 ROANOKE REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY
 HOUSING UNITS AND WAITING LISTS⁽¹⁾

<u>PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS</u>	<u>WAITING LISTS</u> ⁽²⁾
190 Efficiencies (elderly only)	10
298 One Bedroom	291
478 Two Bedroom	410
393 Three Bedroom	82
123 Four Bedroom	13
33 Five Bedroom	1
1,515 TOTAL	807 TOTAL

<u>Section 8 Units</u>	<u>Waiting List</u>
1,211 Units (including 94 rehabilitation models not yet open)	722

- (1) For a complete description of all the RRHA programs see the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority's 1986 Annual Report.
- (2) These are approximations since waiting lists change daily, with the exception of the list for two bedroom units which has been temporarily closed.

Transitional Housing

Members of virtually every client group mentioned in this report need transitional housing of some kind. Examples are the street person attempting to escape the street life, the displaced family needing shelter and a chance to save up some financial resources in order to get re-established, the deinstitutionalized individual needing an array of support services and gradual return to independence, and the ex-offender returning to the community with little or no resources or support systems. There are a few special transitional facilities available in the Roanoke area. Mental Health Services of the Roanoke Valley runs several group homes for mentally retarded individuals, residential treatment facilities for substance abusers and a limited apartment living program for deinstitutionalized mentally ill individuals. The City Rescue Mission's Recovery Program is intended to be a transitional program, and Justice House also appears to fill that role for some of its residents. The family shelters run by the Mission and Salvation Army also serve this need to some extent, although they are not set up to provide long-term transitional shelter and services through those facilities. The Salvation Army's Battered Women's Shelter and the Pre-Release Program also provide transitional shelter for selected client groups. Despite this array of facilities, the actual amount of transitional shelter in this area is very small, and many of the group facilities find that there is no place to which their residents can "graduate" since adequate low-cost permanent housing is in short supply.

The major barrier to increasing transitional housing has been neighborhood opposition to such facilities and zoning codes which reflect that opposition. Transitional facilities generally need to be close to an array of social services since residents often do not have their own transportation. This has

traditionally meant that such facilities are located in the City. The movement toward residential neighborhood self-identity and preservation, which has been fostered by the City government, has led to increasingly effective opposition to the zoning exceptions required for group homes. In recent years citizens of the City, the County and Salem have objected to efforts to relocate existing residential services or to develop new ones. In the past year vigorous opposition to the relocation of the Battered Women's Shelter and TRUST have left service organizations frustrated by the contradiction between community expectations that they care for segments of the population and community resistance to providing these services. Those particular situations have highlighted the public policy dilemma faced by elected officials in area governments. Is the general public welfare benefited more by permitting transitional residential services to be placed in established neighborhoods over the objection of nearby property owners, or deferring to the desire of property owners or neighborhood groups either to accept or reject such facilities? That dilemma must be resolved before this community can address the need for additional transitional housing.

Housing Support Services

Financial Aid

Low-income individuals in their own or publicly subsidized housing probably request emergency financial assistance more than any other single kind of support service. Some of the reasons for this are the fact that they simply do not have enough money each month to live on, they do not earn enough to cover extra expected costs such as high winter heating bills or unexpected costs for medical emergencies and car repairs; and they often lack money management and consumer skills. Some real limitations are placed on low-income people's abilities to be good consumers. For example, they lack transportation

to large grocery stores and must rely on more expensive convenience stores; they cannot afford washers and dryers and must use laundromats; or they lack good credit references and so rely on credit institutions which charge higher interest rates than commercial banks.

In addition to these personal financial limitations, low-income people are adversely affected by some utility company policies and procedures. One policy that causes undue hardship on the low-income person is the practice of sending estimated bills during bad weather months. Estimated bills are invariably higher than those normally incurred, and a person with fixed financial resources may not be able to adjust his/her budget to meet these unexpected costs. The next month's bill is credited for the "overage", but this is too late to help the individual who could not pay the prior month's estimated bill. A related problem is Appalachian Power Company's policy of requiring full payment of all bills, which places extreme financial stress on low-income families during winter months, who often cannot qualify for "budget" billing.

The emergency financial requests of low-income people far exceed the ability of the Valley's public and private agencies to respond. There are some public emergency assistance programs like Emergency General Relief and local funds for rental assistance, as well as fuel assistance programs available through local departments of social services. Roanoke Area Ministries coordinates the donations of churches and individuals and disburses them through food pantries and emergency service organizations like TAP's Community Outreach Program and the Presbyterian Community Center. TAP and the Presbyterian Community Center each have other funds they can draw upon. Help, Inc. offers emergency financial assistance, and many churches also maintain discretionary funds to help people in need. Utility companies encourage donations during winter months to aid consumers who cannot pay fuel bills. However,

such organizations have restrictions on the amounts of money or the number of times a particular individual may be helped, because they do not have enough funds to meet all requests. Every organization in the emergency assistance chain is in the frequent and regrettable position of telling clients that their financial needs are greater than the community can meet.

The two most frequent reasons for requesting emergency assistance are for housing payments and utility bills. Failure to pay such bills can result in eviction or living in substandard living conditions due to loss of utility services. Each eviction or utility cutoff requires that even more financial resources are required to re-establish the households since additional deposits and repayment of previous balances are required for reinstatement. Even if emergency assistance organizations help clients out of a current emergency or find them other housing, the chronic underlying conditions mean that many of these people will find themselves in a state of financial emergency again and again. The real limitation in emergency financial assistance efforts is not the number of sources of funds. (In fact, it could be argued that there is not enough coordination and consolidation of resources, and there are too many fragmented access points to emergency funds.) Rather, it is that there is simply not enough total emergency funding available to address the needs of low-income people in this community.

Food, Clothing and other In-Kind Services

There are a number of food pantries and clothes closets in the Roanoke Valley, many run through churches, that provide emergency assistance to low-income people. Those who simply lack the money to purchase necessities or who run out of money for food towards the end of the month rely on this extended network of services. Food pantries have had a difficult time getting

donations to match requests in the past year, but in general, they do a good job of making sure no one who can reach them goes hungry. Requests for furniture and baby equipment are harder to meet because these items are not donated as often and so are in short supply.

Housing and Financial Counseling

Total Action Against Poverty's Housing Office has counselors who provide assistance to individuals with short term and long term housing needs. The office works closely with private emergency service agencies and the area's public departments of social services. Workers at the departments of social services provide counseling on housing to their own clients. Institutional facilities, like the state hospitals, the Veterans Administration Medical Center, as well as local Community Service Boards have discharge planners who help their clients make living arrangements before they leave the institution, if the client permits.

Consumer Credit Counseling Services is the one organization in the Valley whose specific function is to provide financial counseling. For no fee it will help people draw up budgets and can, because of the cooperation of major vendors in the area, establish and manage a debt repayment plan for those facing a financial crisis. When it is unable to help people because of the unlikelihood that they can repay their indebtedness, it refers them on to attorneys for bankruptcy procedures. Consumer Credit is a small operation with only a few counselors. Other organizations like TAP and the social service departments will try to help people with budgeting as well.

Special Services for Special Groups

Mental Health Services of the Roanoke Valley (MHS) is the organization in the Valley charged with the responsibility to serve the mentally retarded, the

chronically mentally ill, and substance abusers. As a public agency funded by federal, state and local money, it can care for those who do not have the resources to use the available private care systems. The agency has a comprehensive inpatient and outpatient program for alcoholics and drug users. MHS also has an extended program for the chronically mentally ill, including a day program called the Mountain House Clubhouse, medication supervision, case management, and some housing supervision and assistance. MHS already has the structure and administration to provide necessary support services for mentally ill persons. Both the Virginia Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation and MHS acknowledge the need for better outreach, emergency services, and case management, as well as improved coordination with other community services. Expanded support services can best be provided by additional funding to MHS earmarked for specific services to the mentally ill population.

In addition, Mountain House, a day club based on principles of Fountain House in New York City, needs its own space separate from clinical facilities in order to serve more deinstitutionalized persons. Only 47 are now active in the program with an average attendance of 18. The agency would like to have funds to rent another building for clinical services for chronically mentally ill people, and reserve the present building for the exclusive use of Mountain House.

Virginia Cares is a private organization whose mission is to assist offenders and their families by helping in the transition from correctional facilities to the community, working to keep families intact while people are incarcerated, and providing job assistance, support groups and other related services.

The League of Older Americans (LOA) provides a variety of direct and advocacy services for elderly people in the community, particularly frail elderly people. Direct services include group dining programs and Meals-on-Wheels, and a volunteer transportation program. LOA has helped to develop two subsidized apartment facilities for the elderly in the Fifth Planning District.

Day Care

Working parents with adequate incomes often experience difficulty locating good quality, affordable day care for their children. For parents on limited incomes, securing reliable affordable child care can become a serious impediment to getting or retaining employment.

There are only two private non-profit licensed day care facilities that provide day care for children on a sliding fee scale basis. Greenvale Nursery and the Northwest Child Development Center operate near capacity and often have waiting lists. They are United Way funded agencies. Neither is equipped to take children under the age of eighteen months. Total Action Against Poverty operates nine Head Start facilities in Roanoke City and Salem. All but one of these facilities provide only half-day care which requires mothers working or in job training to make additional child care and transportation arrangements. The cost of such care was cited by some clients in publicly subsidized housing as a barrier to seeking employment.

Transportation

It is hard to get or keep a job without reliable transportation. An automobile is expensive to buy and maintain. Yet anyone who does not have access to reliable private transportation will find alternatives very limited in the Roanoke Valley. Valley Metro is the public bus system that operates in the

City and on a few routes in Roanoke County. Unified Human Services Transportation System (RADAR in the City and CORTRAN* in the County) uses local public funds and private contracts to provide limited transportation to the handicapped and elderly. Lack of private transportation is one of the major reasons why so many in the at-risk group must live close to work or along the City's Valley Metro transit routes.

Job Training and Assistance

The Fifth District Employment and Training Consortium provides a range of training and job assistance programs for disadvantaged people in the Fifth Planning District. The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services, TAP, Virginia Cares, ARC/CHD Industries, Tinker Mountain Industries, the Virginia Employment Commission, LOA, Virginia Western Community College and the Department of Social Service are all involved in helping to rehabilitate, train or find employment for persons who are disabled in some way or disadvantaged economically or educationally. The area's public school systems have adult education programs as well. Each of these organizations has its own eligibility criteria for clients.

*The future of public funding for CORTRAN by Roanoke County is in doubt as this report goes to press.

TABLE 3

SELECTED SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE IN ROANOKE CITY
AND NEIGHBORING LOCALITIES

SERVICE	Roanoke City	Roanoke County/ Salem	Botetourt County	Craig County	Franklin County	Montgomery County
Emergency Shelters	X				X ⁽¹⁾	
Section 8 Housing	X	X				X
Public Housing	X				X	
Public Employment & Training Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Head Start Child Care	X	X		X	X	X
Sliding Fee Scale Day Care	X					X
Public Welfare Programs:	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Food Stamps (3)	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Aid to Dependent Children (3)	X	X	X	X	X	X
- General Relief (4)	X	X	X			
- 100% Local Emergency General Relief	X	X	X ⁽²⁾	X	X	X
- Medicaid (3)	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Auxilliary Grant Program (4) (to subsidize Homes for Adults)	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Fuel Program (4)	X	X	X	X	X	X

(1) Social Services Department can provide money for motel

(2) Emergency medical only

(3) Federally mandated

(4) State mandated

CONCLUSIONS

The Chronically Homeless and Shelter Services

Roanoke's homeless/shelter population appears to number at least 177 people. The largest segment of Roanoke's shelter population is single men, and, according to shelter organizations, a fair proportion of them are regulars who have frequented the shelters for years. Many of those who rely on the shelters appear to have alcohol or drug problems or seem mentally or emotionally unstable, conditions which make it difficult for such individuals to develop alternatives to this lifestyle.

Families comprise a growing portion of the shelter population. Many of the families seen by the shelters have recently moved to Roanoke to seek work and housing or are in the process of moving through Roanoke to another location. Those local families which turn to shelters do so only in emergency circumstances. It is the consensus of the Task Force that the shelters are not appropriate facilities for these transitionally homeless families except for truly temporary emergency situations.

All of the organizations providing emergency shelter to homeless people, the City Rescue Mission, the Salvation Army, Justice House, and TRUST, are private, non-profit organizations, and the first three are part of religious organizations. Together they are equipped to provide emergency shelter to approximately 97 individuals. There are an additional 30 slots for people in the Rescue Mission's Recovery Program. In addition, three of the facilities can pay for limited motel space for families.

These numbers reflect an emergency shelter system that is being stretched beyond its capacity to provide safe and adequate shelter. The Salvation Army provides 24 beds in its shelter for men but considers it more ideally suited

for only 15 persons. Justice House reports that it shelters three times the number of people it is intended to house. Most of the facilities limit the stay of people during the day and even during the night in good weather months. These policies mean that homeless people have almost no where to go during the day, and for six months of the year, at night if they have used their allotted number of nights. Shelters for families and women, although more generous in terms of use regulations, are self-described as inadequate because of a lack of day services and a lack of facilities to serve intact families.

All of the sheltering organizations manifest a strong sense of caring and advocacy for their clients, and two of them, the City Rescue Mission and the Salvation Army, have been providing shelter for decades. These two agencies, while the largest and oldest of the providers, have limited access to public monies because of their religious orientation. In fact, the City Rescue Mission accepts no public funds because of required restrictions on its religious activities. The Salvation Army and TRUST receive United Way funding, and all the shelters but TRUST rely heavily on private donations.

There has been considerable debate about the rules and regulations imposed by some shelter organizations on those whom they shelter. All of them have some regulations about who may or may not stay with them and under what conditions clients may use the facilities. Many of these regulations are geared to the safety and health of the other clients and the ability of staff to deal with aberrant behavior. Regulations dealing with religious participation are enforced by those organizations which believe that the provision of spiritual counseling is as important to these people as food and shelter. It was pointed out to the Task Force that agencies which serve the transient/homeless populations are, by and large, religious organizations which do so

out of a sense of ministry, and this is true in Roanoke. However, some potential clients claim to prefer sleeping out of doors to submitting to requirements that they attend chapel or bathe.

For those organizations that see themselves primarily as emergency shelter providers, rules regarding the numbers of nights that someone can stay help to keep these shelters from becoming permanent housing, yet these policies mean that many people must sleep in the open or in abandoned buildings because they have used up their allowance of temporary lodging. Similarly, policies requiring people to leave during the day are based on the shelters' lack of space and staff. This means that transients, the homeless, and street people must keep on the move on the City streets during the daylight hours. All of the shelters point out a strong need for day services for the homeless which would include simple day facilities as well as professional outreach services.

In summary, those agencies providing temporary shelter fill a critical need in Roanoke and clearly have been doing so to the best of their abilities and resources. Some of the rules and regulations are viewed negatively by the clients, yet the variation among the agencies does provide some limited options for users of the service. These agencies' ability to draw upon private financial resources is a great asset to the community, since public monies fluctuate with changes in government policies and public attitudes, and many of the people served by these agencies already have "fallen through the cracks" of the public system. However, these providers and the Task Force concur that additional services are needed for this population including adequate overnight facilities, facilities for intact families, day services, expanded night shelter throughout the year, and transitional living and support services.

Those At Risk of Homelessness and Housing and Related Services

There are an estimated 14,757 households in the Roanoke Valley whose incomes are near or below the poverty level. However, there are only about 4,653 housing units for which public rent subsidies are available. This means that as many as ^{10,}104 poverty households are at risk of homelessness due to their precarious financial situations arising out of the high proportion of income which they must commit to housing and the substandard condition of the housing which they can afford.

Within this group of people with limited economic resources there are identifiable populations whose personal or social circumstances place them at risk. These include minimum or part-time wage earners, single women with children (especially women receiving Aid to Dependent Children subsidies), deinstitutionalized mentally ill persons, ex-offenders, people with serious disabling conditions, and the elderly.

It is very difficult for these at-risk groups to secure decent private housing. In Roanoke the fair market price for a two-bedroom apartment, including utilities, is \$360.00 per month. A single mother with one or two children who works full-time for the minimum wage would have to spend 62% of her earnings just for rent and utilities for such a two-bedroom apartment. Therefore, it is no surprise that Roanoke City's Redevelopment and Housing Authority recently closed its waiting list for two-bedroom units with more than 400 eligible families on the list.

Public housing and public subsidized housing is available in the City and, to a more limited extent, in surrounding areas of the Valley, but it is clearly inadequate to meet local need. Private initiatives like Habitat for

Humanity are a positive but modest addition to housing resources. There are also an array of different social services to address the needs of these at-risk people.

It is critically important that the federal government continue to support public and private subsidized housing. In lieu of housing subsidies for all who need them, it is imperative that communities offer basic services such as public transportation and day care on a sliding scale basis, using public and private dollars to supplement the income of the working poor. It is also very important that appropriate social service agencies provide transitional housing and support services to their at risk clientele and that local governments acknowledge the need for such transitional housing programs in their community planning and zoning activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. EMERGENCY SHELTER BED SPACE SHOULD BE EXPANDED BY THE WINTER OF 1987 SO THAT THERE ARE ENOUGH BEDS TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR SHELTER AND THEY ARE PROVIDED IN SAFE, CLEAN AND ADEQUATE FACILITIES THAT MEET OCCUPANCY CODES. Currently, while existing shelters manage to house everyone seeking shelter in the worst weather, they do so by overcrowding buildings which are, by their own estimations, inadequate to provide needed services. Shelter facilities are also currently not designed to meet the needs of families seeking temporary shelter. The Task Force does not support the proliferation of small emergency shelters. To the contrary, we recommend that those agencies already providing these services be supported with available federal, state, local, and private dollars.
2. AT LEAST TWO ALL-DAY QUALITY CHILD CARE CENTERS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE NEXT YEAR BY LOCAL RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS WHEREBY LOW-INCOME PARENTS AND TEMPORARILY HOMELESS PARENTS COULD RECEIVE FREE OR MINIMAL COST CHILD CARE FOR THEIR CHILDREN. Despite the availability of Head Start Programs, Greenvale Nursery, and the Northwest Child Development Center, there is a tremendous need for minimal fee or free high quality child care services in the Valley. The need is especially great for infant care. This is one area in which religious congregations can make a substantial contribution. While church-affiliated child care centers are exempt from state licensing, the Task Force strongly recommends that any established centers meet state regulations to the fullest extent possible. Finally, the United Way of Roanoke Valley is to be commended for its high priority funding of subsidized child care.

3. A COMPREHENSIVE DAY FACILITY FOR CHRONICALLY HOMELESS AND STREET PEOPLE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE YEAR. THIS FACILITY SHOULD OFFER A SAFE INDOOR FACILITY WITH MINIMAL RULES FOR THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO SIMPLY WANT TO STAY INDOORS DURING THE DAY BUT SHOULD ALSO OFFER A LOCAL ADDRESS FOR THE HOMELESS AND OUTREACH SERVICES FROM KEY AGENCIES, INCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES, THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATIVE SERVICES, THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT, ASSISTANCE TO TRAVELERS, MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND OTHERS. One of the existing soup kitchens could be located in such a facility so that at a minimum food and shelter are provided. Yet at the same time, outreach workers from key agencies, rotating in set times and days weekly, could provide centralized access to services to those individuals needing and desiring assistance. The proposed facility could include or augment the services already available through the Samaritan Inn. Presently the Inn provides the only day facility for homeless and street people. It is open seven days a week, several hours a day, through volunteer effort, and it may close its doors this summer if a new site is not found.

4. AT LEAST ONE ADDITIONAL TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FACILITY SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED FOR THE HOMELESS WITHIN THE CALENDAR YEAR. In this study the need for a variety of transitional facilities has been documented. Several such facilities are currently under investigation in the community, including a relocation of Justice House to apartment buildings and the purchase of a men's single room occupancy-type hotel by Total Action Against Poverty. This type of housing is desperately needed by many of the at-risk groups represented in this study. This community's goal should be the working operation of at least one facility within a year.

5. THE CITY OF ROANOKE:

- a) SHOULD REVIEW AND REVISE LOCAL ZONING ORDINANCES WHICH PLACE UNREASONABLE ROADBLOCKS TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRANSITIONAL RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES AND APPROPRIATE SUPPORT SERVICES. Many local agencies which are charged with responsibility for these populations and for developing and maintaining adequate services are frustrated by an inability to overcome local zoning roadblocks. While the Task Force acknowledges that citizens have a right to influence the makeup of their neighborhoods, many of the client groups which are the focus of this study lack the ability to speak regarding their own needs. A humane balance between the concerns of homeowners and the needs of our disadvantaged citizens needs to be achieved. Roanoke City could become a model for other communities to follow, including our neighboring localities.
- b) SHOULD EXPLORE TAX AND OTHER INCENTIVES IT MIGHT EMPLOY TO ENCOURAGE PRIVATE LANDLORDS TO REHABILITATE AND MAINTAIN MODESTLY PRICED HOUSING. Private commercial sector involvement in rehabilitation and repair projects would also serve to focus the attention of the business community on the issue of housing availability and thereby spur some creative private solutions to these problems.
- c) SHOULD EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF WAIVING CONNECTION FEES FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS WHICH ARE THE SUPPLIERS OF DIRECT HOUSING SERVICES TO THE HOMELESS AND AT-RISK POPULATIONS. Currently there is no exception policy for organizations of this type.
- d) SHOULD CONSIDER THE PERMANENT LOW COST HOUSING NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY IN ANY STUDIES OR PLANS REGARDING URBAN RENEWAL. A member of the Task Force should be included on future planning committees.

- e) SHOULD UNDERTAKE CONCENTRATED INSPECTION OF OCCUPIED SUBSTANDARD HOUSING IN ADDITION TO CURRENT EFFORTS TO INSPECT VACANT HOUSING. Currently, federally funded inspectors concentrate on vacant housing.
- f) SHOULD MAINTAIN THROUGH ITS BUILDING DEPARTMENT A CURRENT, UPDATED LIST OF ALL SUBSIDIZED HOUSING, WHETHER ADMINISTERED AT THE LOCAL, STATE OR FEDERAL LEVEL. No agency in the Valley has a complete and accurate list of all the housing units even though many agencies need this information. The Task Force developed such a list during the course of this study.
- g) SHOULD ESTABLISH A SINGLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON HOUSING PROGRAMS, HOUSING RELATED GRANTS, MODEL PROGRAM INFORMATION AND OTHER RELATED MATERIALS. This single source of information could help agencies to obtain funds of which they may not now be aware, and do so in a cost-efficient manner.
- h) SHOULD ESTABLISH A MECHANISM THROUGH WHICH AGENCIES COULD APPLY FOR THE VARIOUS PUBLIC FUNDS THAT ARE NOW BEING MADE AVAILABLE FOR SERVICES TO THE HOMELESS. A mechanism which would allow for formal application and review, as well as monitor the use of such funds, is needed. The Citizens' Services Committee under the Directorate of Human Resources might be the appropriate channel for this process.
- i) SHOULD, THROUGH THE OFFICE OF CITY MANAGER, NAME A SMALL EVALUATION GROUP TO EVALUATE HOW WELL THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS REPORT ARE CARRIED OUT AND TO RECOMMEND NEW ACTIVITIES BASED ON FUTURE FUNDING AND NEEDS. This evaluation group should include citizens to help ensure objectivity and should be given enough staff support to collect needed information.

- j) SHOULD MAKE USE OF ALL EXISTING AND NEW PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR RESOURCES TO BETTER EQUIP RESIDENTS OF SUBSIDIZED AND LOW-COST HOUSING TO CARE FOR AND MAINTAIN THAT HOUSING. The need for such counseling and education was pointed out to the Task Force on several occasions. While many organizations provide some assistance of this nature, there is no single agency responsible for addressing this need.
6. A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IMMEDIATELY BY THE COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, AND PRIVATELY DONATED FUNDS ENGENDERED BY THIS STUDY SHOULD BE CHanneled TO THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR DISBURSEMENT TO APPROPRIATE AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS. The Task Force feels strongly that private funds are needed to help address the needs identified in this study since public funds are clearly inadequate to meet the many issues raised here. A number of mechanisms for handling private funds were reviewed, and a community foundation seems like the best alternative. Such a foundation is funded by gifts and bequests of citizens with varying financial capabilities. Contributions can be given to the general foundation or linked to very specific intentions such as services for the homeless or those at risk of homelessness. The benefit of a community foundation is that each donation has greater financial impact than if it were made independently. The Council of Community Services is now in the process of establishing a community foundation. The Task Force urges the Council of Community Services to hasten its efforts so that the foundation will be in place to receive donations that may come from this study.

7. LOCALITIES SURROUNDING ROANOKE CITY SHOULD APPLY FOR AND DEVELOP PUBLICLY SUBSIDIZED HOUSING PROGRAMS OR ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE THEIR DEVELOPMENT BY RESPONSIBLE PRIVATE SOURCES. IF A LOCALITY DECIDES THAT IT CANNOT OR SHOULD NOT BECOME INVOLVED IN PUBLIC OR SECTION 8 HOUSING, IT SHOULD MAKE MONETARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CITY AND THE REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY BASED ON THE RESIDENCE OF ORIGIN OF THOSE ACCEPTED INTO THE CITY'S PROGRAMS. Although there is some private Section 8 housing available in Roanoke County and Salem, most of it is for senior citizens, and there is no subsidized housing available in Botetourt County. Roanoke County plans to have 25 Section 8 certificates by this summer, but the need for subsidized housing is very great. People from other localities come to Roanoke simply to obtain subsidized housing, and neighboring localities have a responsibility to address this drain on the City's resources.
8. ROANOKE REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY, THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD), AND THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EACH SHOULD INSTITUTE AND ENFORCE CAREFUL SCREENING PROCEDURES FOR LANDLORDS AS TO RENTAL MAINTENANCE PRACTICES. Many tenants complained about the sanitation of apartments, broken equipment, and other problems with apartments that they had difficulty getting landlords to correct. Because Section 8 is administered by three different sources, screening methods and ongoing quality control efforts are not uniform. Therefore some uniformity in practices and improvement in procedures would enhance the quality of this source of housing.
9. THE ROANOKE REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY SHOULD ALTER ITS PRIORITY SYSTEM WHICH DECLARES PUBLIC HOUSING AND SECTION 8 CERTIFICATE HOUSING AS BEING EQUAL IN STATUS AND WHICH, THEREFORE, SERVES TO DISCOURAGE

CLIENTS FROM MOVING TO SECTION 8 CERTIFICATE HOUSING FROM THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS. Members of the Task Force and those clients who were interviewed view Section 8 certificate housing as intrinsically preferable to public housing. Although both programs offer financial subsidy, Section 8 housing enhances the tenant's ability to choose housing and is generally viewed as allowing more privacy and better housing for families. The current priority system makes it unlikely that families will be able to move from one type of subsidized housing into another.

10. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND AGENCIES LIKE TOTAL ACTION AGAINST POVERTY AND THE LEAGUE OF OLDER AMERICANS SHOULD DEVELOP CONTINUING HOME MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS FOR LOW-INCOME HOMEOWNERS, ESPECIALLY THE ELDERLY. There are a number of programs in place to assist home owners, including weatherization programs run by TAP and critical housing repair programs available from the City and the Redevelopment and Housing Authority. However, the Task Force heard repeatedly that low-income home owners, particularly the elderly, have a difficult time maintaining their housing and often live in substandard housing as a result. Preventive maintenance programs could help to assure that people do not live in substandard housing and also would help to preserve existing housing stock.
11. LOCAL UTILITY COMPANIES SHOULD CHANGE THOSE BILLING PRACTICES WHICH PRECIPITATE HOUSING CRISES FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES. The practices of issuing high estimated bills during winter months and demanding full payment of bills exacerbate a low-income household's financial crisis and make it difficult for emergency assistance programs to help. The high estimate bills are followed in succeeding months by payment credits, but this practice unfairly affects a family with no leeway in their budget

Clients who are working to repay utility bills through emergency services agencies or the Consumer Credit Counseling Services should be viewed more tolerantly by the utility companies as well.

12. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OF ROANOKE VALLEY (MHS) SHOULD DEVELOP A PROCEDURE WHEREBY MHS EXTENDED CARE STAFF ACTIVELY CONTACT ALL INDIVIDUALS TO BE RELEASED TO THIS COMMUNITY FROM A STATE INSTITUTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DETERMINING WHETHER THE DISCHARGE PLANS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR THESE INDIVIDUALS AND IF THEY ARE IN NEED OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THEM. MHS estimates that as many as 30 to 35% of all released individuals do not seek out mental health support services. Although no firm statistics are available it is apparent that some of these people join the ranks of the chronically homeless. More active outreach could give the community better statistics regarding this problem and assure that all have the opportunity to avail themselves of existing services.

13. THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL RETARDATION SHOULD DEVELOP A SUBSIDY PROGRAM THROUGH WHICH OPERATORS OF HOMES FOR ADULTS AND OTHER GROUPS COULD GET ADDITIONAL FUNDS IF THEY AGREE TO OFFER TRANSITIONAL LIVING SITUATIONS AND APPROPRIATE SUPPORT SERVICES TO HELP RESIDENTS TO LEARN TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY. Currently homes for adults receive auxilliary grants through state and local social service funds to provide room and board and basic supervision of residents. The institutional nature of these facilities makes it difficult for people to graduate to independent living. A subsidy program, offered under the supervision of local community service boards, could do much to make homes for adults into critically needed transitional living facilities.

14. LOCAL RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS CAN AND SHOULD MAKE A MORE SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS MEETING THE EMERGENCY, SHORT-TERM NEEDS OF THE HOMELESS AND THOSE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS, BUT THEY SHOULD DO SO IN A COORDINATED FASHION THROUGH ROANOKE AREA MINISTRIES. Direct involvement by congregations through volunteer efforts for transportation, housing repair and other services and increased emergency financial assistance are both needed, but coordination is essential if the community is to avoid confusion on the part of clients and duplication of effort by congregations. The proposed Community Foundation recommended above is intended to coordinate financial contributions geared to long-term solutions to community needs.

15. THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SHOULD SUPPORT SYSTEMS WHICH HELP LOW-INCOME WAGE EARNERS AND THEIR FAMILIES AVOID CRISES. Families living on incomes below \$5.50 per hour simply cannot make enough money to cover all basic living expenses without subsidy and are at high risk of homelessness if they encounter an unexpected financial emergency such as an illness, an accident or even the replacement of a car. Day care and health care are two of the biggest drains on a low-income family's resources and, therefore, should be a priority for such business support.

16. LOCAL AGENCIES WHICH ADVOCATE THE RIGHTS AND NEEDS OF THE CLIENT GROUPS REPRESENTED IN THE HOMELESS AND AT-RISK POPULATIONS SHOULD BE SUPPORTED IN THEIR EFFORTS TO EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE ABOUT THE NEEDS AND RIGHTS OF THE DISABLED AND DISADVANTAGED MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITIES. Local governments are hampered in their efforts to be responsive to these special needs groups because of widespread community prejudice and

reluctance to allow service programs into individual neighborhoods. Only strong advocacy efforts by agencies will help to erase popular myths and create more positive and open views of our disabled and disadvantaged neighbors.

17. THE EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE WHICH MEETS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY SERVICES SHOULD IMMEDIATELY EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN ITS EFFORTS TO COORDINATE SERVICES AND TO ACT AS AN ADVOCACY GROUP ON BEHALF OF THE HOMELESS AND THOSE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS. The Emergency Services Committee is comprised of representatives from all private and public agencies involved in this effort. It currently is active during winter months or if a special need arises. It needs to meet on a regular basis throughout the year and place some special emphasis on coordination of services to and advocacy of safe emergency/temporary shelter for these target groups.

18. THE TASK FORCE SUPPORTS THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER'S RECENT FUNDING PROPOSAL FOCUSING ON THE NEEDS OF HOMELESS VETERANS IN THE COMMUNITY. Veterans comprise a significant segment of the chronic homeless population in the Valley, and those with substance abuse or chronic alcohol dependency problems are often in a revolving door between shelter and detoxification facilities. Services to this group should involve actual housing subsidies and other direct services, since coordination of these services is already provided through the Emergency Services Committee of the Council of Community Services.

REFERENCES

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League of Older Americans, Inc., Senior Housing Report, 1987.

Martin Research, Inc. A Roanoke Valley Human Service Needs Assessment: An Evaluation of Community Needs and Service Provision with the United Way Service Area. Prepared for United Way of Roanoke Valley, Inc., Roanoke, VA, 1986.

U. S. Conference of Mayors, The Growth of Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty in America's Cities in 1985: A 25-City Survey. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Conference of Mayors, 1986.

AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY

Baptist Friendship House
Charity Community House
City Rescue Mission
Council of Community Services' Information and Referral Center of Southwest
Virginia
Fifth Planning District Commission
Fifth District Employment and Training Consortium
Justice House
League of Older Americans
Mental Health Services of Roanoke Valley
Presbyterian Community Center
Roanoke Area Ministries
Roanoke City Building Office
Roanoke City Department of Social Services
Roanoke City Health Department
Roanoke City Jail
Roanoke City Police Department
Roanoke City Public Schools
Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership
Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority
Salvation Army
Samaritan Inn
Social Security Administration
Total Action Against Poverty
TRUST
Veterans Administration Medical Center
Virginia Cares
Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services
Virginia Housing Development Authority
Virginia Employment Commission
YWCA

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC HEARINGS HELD FOR THIS STUDY

- January 15 - Mountainview Recreation Center
- January 15 - Hurt Park Elementary Schools
- January 28 - City Rescue Mission
- February 12 - Forest Park Elementary School
- February 19 - Fallon Park School

JANUARY 29, 1987

CLIENT INTERVIEW SHEET
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES*

1. Is individual 69 - Alone
 3 - Part of family unit

2. Is individual 65 - Male
 6 - Female

3. Is individual 2 - Under age 21
 54 - 21 - 55
 16 - 55+

4. Is individual 47 - Resident of Roanoke
 24 - From other area
 Specify: _____

5. Financial status: (check all that apply)
 6 - employed, full time
 31 - employed, part time (includes City Rescue Mission's Recovery
 Program)**
 9 - laid-off from job
 2 - receiving ADC
 2 - receiving General Relief
 5 - receiving Social Security
 5 - receiving S.S.I.
 6 - receiving Food Stamps
 6 - on Medicaid
 4 - on Medicare
 1 - unemployed
 3 - veteran's pension

6. Notes:

* Response totals differ between categories because some clients did not answer all questions.

** Figures adjusted in report because some of these responses were questionable.