

ITEM #:	<u>43</u>
DATE:	<u>05-13-25</u>
DEPT:	<u>CMO</u>

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: **ACCEPTING THE CONVERSATIONS ON HOMELESSNESS AMES AND
STORY COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 REPORT**

BACKGROUND:

On August 13, 2024, the City Council approved authorizing City staff to explore, engage and enter into an agreement with a consultant to host community conversations around homelessness for up to \$12,000 from the unallocated, undesignated FY 2024/25 ASSET funds. In fall 2024, Story County Board of Supervisors also approved \$12,000 to put towards this initiative. Although the City of Ames and Story County contributed financially towards this effort, the ASSET board and staff have been working collaborative to lead this endeavor to identify strategies to address homelessness.

In December 2025, Analytic Insight was selected as the consultant ("Consultant") to host community conversations and to develop an action plan. The Consultant visited Ames in February 2025 and interviewed Ames and Story County service providers as well as individuals experiencing homelessness. Additionally, the Consultant conducted virtual interviews with key stakeholders throughout February and March. The Consultant was also provided a variety of data reports, previous meeting notes on homelessness, and other pertinent materials to help inform the Consultant about the landscape of homelessness in Ames and Story County.

The Consultant was charged with taking in all the information provided, conducting additional interviews with key stakeholders, analyzing data, and identifying funding opportunities for assisting the unhoused in the Story County area. The culmination of the Consultant's work is the "[Homelessness Ames and Story County Strategic Plan 2025](#)" report ("Report").

The Report contains:

- A suggested Vision Statement to End Homelessness (recommended by the Consultant to be refined by the community).
- An overview of the background of Story County including an analysis of the available data.
- Strengths and challenges of the community around addressing homelessness.
- A three-year recommended action plan with specific recommendations for each of the three years.

In addition to the report, the Consultant provided a one-page handout summarizing the recommended strategies by year (see attachment).

It should be emphasized that this Report is not expected to be adopted as a formal policy document or plan. Instead, it offers recommendations of suggested actions, that if taken, can address homelessness and move the community towards the vision of being a place where everyone has safe and stable housing.

The proposed action strategies are a combination of initiatives involving the City of Ames, Story County, not-for-profit service providers, businesses, hospitals, and other community partners. It will be up to the current and/or future City Council to decide whether to adopt any of the individual recommended strategies from the report and what role the City will have in the

strategies pursued.

Collaborating with other entities will be the catalyst to moving the needle forward on addressing homelessness and assisting the unhoused. Therefore, if accepted by the City Council, the next step would be to direct staff to work with other key agencies, such as the Analysis on Social Services Evaluation Team (ASSET) Funders, to identify priority elements. It should be noted that on Thursday, May 15, there will be an ASSET Joint Funders Meeting to talk about funding priorities. This will also be an opportunity to revisit this Report with the other ASSET Funder boards (Story County Board of Supervisors, United Way of Story County Board, and Iowa State University Student Government).

Staff Comments on the Report Recommendations:

Staff has reviewed the recommendations in the report and has provided some initial comments on the recommendations. The information below is meant to give some context to how the City might choose to play a role in each of the recommendations. Please note the recommendations are re-ordered and may have shifted in terms of what year to accomplish which recommendations. Staff believes the outlined below is more feasible or desirable than what was presented in the report.

Year One (FY 2025/26):

Recommendation:	Staff Comments:
Continue to Support on-the-Ground Service Provider Partnerships	City staff can work with other ASSET funder staff to meet with the HOST team and brainstorm ways to assist the HOST group. This may include the City (or other partners) helping with setting up ground rules, utilizing administrative tools to track meeting notes, leading effective meetings, exploring the use of shared software amongst service providers, establishing agreements about what it means to be part of HOST, and other elements.
Provide Robust Case Management Services Across the County	<p>Story County is exploring the possibility of adding a case manager to help fill a current service gap. If approved, this position could also do some strategic outreach with community partners to identify affordable housing opportunities.</p> <p>The City set aside \$96,229 of ASSET funds in FY 2025/26 for continuous improvement opportunities and housing needs. The City could consider supporting trainings available around case management for service providers or supporting Story County in establishing a case manager position.</p>
Create a Task Force on Homelessness	The consistent feedback from the community after the rollout of the Report was to move more quickly to establish a homelessness task force. Analytic Insight indicated the intent of this group is to be policy and funding focused. While there are already several ad hoc groups meeting around homelessness, if City Council accepts this report and directs staff to continue working towards solutions emphasizing the importance of this task force, staff will explore formalizing a homelessness task force.

Align with or Supplement Local Funding for Emergency Housing	<p>One immediate step the City can take related to this recommendation is to ensure the City's ASSET funding priorities are in alignment with the housing needs. On May 15, 2025, there will be an ASSET Joint Funders Meeting to discuss ways to ensure housing is receiving the priority desired by the ASSET Funders when compared to all the human services supported through ASSET.</p> <p>A longer-term action the City could explore is engaging with other non-ASSET funders to form new partnerships and identify other funding opportunities. There are other community partners not part of the ASSET process that may have an interest in addressing homelessness that ASSET has not engaged in conversations with. If the task force is created, the Report suggests that exploring funding opportunities outside of ASSET would be part of the task force's charge.</p>
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Year Two (FY 2026/27):

Build Peer Navigator Program	If desired, the City could partner with other community partners to pilot a peer navigator program.
Support Developing Efforts to Provide All-Weather Daytime Refuge	If desired, the City could partner with other community partners to explore all options for daytime refuge. This could include more outreach to community partners to learn about potential partnerships or seeking new partnership to provide daytime refuge or services.

Year Three (FY 2027/28):

Plan and Fund Permanent Supportive Housing	This recommendation focuses on ensuring there is affordable housing available to the community. If the items in year one and two are successful, the community will be better positioned to collaborate on an affordable housing development opportunity.
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*The "Expand Partnership with IowaWORKS Mobile Workforce Center Job Fairs" recommendation is not listed above because Story County might be the best fit to lead this effort since it is outside of Ames.

* The "Expand Emergency Shelter Capacity" recommendation is not listed above because the existing shelters are owned and operated by not-for-profit agencies.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Accept the Conversations on Homelessness Ames and Story County Strategic Plan 2025 Report and direct staff to work with other ASSET Funders to identify priority items.
2. Refer this document to City staff for further information.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The Homelessness Ames and Story County Strategic Plan 2025 Report includes nine action recommendations to address homelessness in the community. **Accepting this report does not adopt it as a formal policy document or plan, but acknowledges the suggested actions, that if taken, can address homelessness and move the community towards the vision of being a place where everyone has safe and stable housing.**

Assuming the City Council desires to continue working with a variety of community partners around homelessness, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1 as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Conversations on Homelessness One-Page Handout.pdf](#)