Homeless Dialogue Project HANDBOOK
Table of Contents

Description of Homeless Dialogue Project............................................3
Dialogue #1 Agenda and Reporting Tool.............................................6
Dialogue #2 and Reporting Tool.........................................................8
Rocky Mountain News Article ............................................................11
DenUM Statistics on Homelessness ...................................................12
Dialogue #3 Agenda and Reporting Tool...........................................14
Dialogue #4 Agenda and Reporting Tool...........................................17
Sustainability Wage Worksheet (blank) ..............................................19
Sustainability Wage Worksheet (actual) .............................................20
Sample Flyer ....................................................................................21
Facilitation Resources and Tips........................................................22
Suggested Ground Rules/ Agreements ..............................................25
Scheduled Dialogues- dates, times and locations..............................30
Contact Information..........................................................................31
The Institute on the Common Good at Regis University, Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods (CHUN), the Colorado Civic Canopy and Capitol Hill United Ministries (CHUM) have collaborated in an effort to bring members of diverse communities together through dialogue around the issue of homelessness.

Regis University sponsors a number of community outreach initiatives which provide a variety of ways to extend the Regis commitment of “men and women in service to others.” One of these community outreach initiatives is the Institute on the Common Good which was established in 1998. The Institute on the Common Good was created to provide opportunities for people in the community with diverse perspectives to engage one another around civic and social issues.

CHUN, serves to represent ten smaller neighborhoods that make up the greater Capitol Hill area and provides a forum for discussing neighborhood issues, including licensing, historic preservation, crime prevention, environmental concerns, neighborhood beautification, street maintenance, education and traffic control.

The Civic Canopy is a network of individuals, organizations, and institutions that share a common mission of increasing the civic engagement of all Colorado citizens. Canopy members work in areas such as education (Pre K-16), business, state and local government, and public service. The Canopy exists solely to support these diverse groups in their work.

Capitol Hill United Ministries is an interfaith religious organization comprising 16 churches and 5 faith-based service agencies in Capitol Hill. Their mission is to be a spiritual presence and resource in the inner city of Denver, to practice hospitality, to advocate for neighbors in need, and to strengthen and sustain member communities, particularly through effective communication and cooperation, enhancing the ministry of all.

Through this partnership we hope to encourage communities and neighborhoods to engage in a new way of communicating and working together. We envision communities using tools of dialogue and deliberation to organize and address pressing issues facing their neighborhoods beyond the complex issue of homelessness. We hope that you find these tools useful and effective throughout your community dialogues.

THE PROBLEM

At many of the most dangerous intersections of the city and surrounding areas, homeless people stand with signs asking for help. The Commission to End Homelessness has responded to these pleas with an unprecedented collaborative effort to provide housing, treatment, and training to those in greatest need. But the Commission’s report itself has landed on another precarious intersection — where individual behavior and community responsibility cross. This tension, so often at the center of policy debates, plays out in familiar media accounts: opponents calling the plan a “big government handout” while supporters trumpet the systemic approach to a complex societal problem.

Whatever the merits or weaknesses of the Commission’s plan, there exists a gap between the level of policy discussions and ways for ordinary citizens to understand the complexities of the issue, to talk with each other face to face about them, and to become involved in creative solutions at the local level.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

According to the 2005 Point in Time Study, there were 10,268 people living without a home in the Denver Metropolitan area on January 24th, 2005. While the conventional understanding of the homeless is that they are predominantly single, male and white, half of the respondents (over the 5000) were a part of a family with children. On that day, respondents were black, white and Hispanic, male and female and ranged in age from six to eighty seven years old. Among the various factors underlying their homelessness were losing a job, domestic abuse, alcohol/substance abuse, mental illness, high housing costs and medical problems. The reality of homelessness is not one kind of person or one type of issue, but a complex tangle of circumstances and problems that can’t be fully understood from one perspective or addressed through one, magic bullet solution.
What it is required is a thoughtful discussion amongst diverse viewpoints, that offers more than a choice between either/or options on policy proposals, but instead provides an opportunity to take into account the complicated nature of the problem. Now, with the Mayoral Commission’s Plan to End Homelessness in our public midst, it is critical that neighborhoods and citizens take a measured and deliberative approach to the issue, and weigh in its policy implications.

But even beyond the specific topic of homelessness, the culture of debate and division reveals a deeper need within our democracy, which depends upon the ability of everyday citizens to deliberate and reach agreement about the best ways to address the needs of the entire community. During this time when political messaging and media framing has become the standard format through which public issues are considered, our ability to engage in face to face dialogue and community critical thinking has received less exercise. The Dialogue on Homelessness Project will provide opportunities for neighborhoods to take part in well-informed, constructive discourse about homelessness and help to strengthen the democratic traditions our community relies upon.

WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE

There are fours outcomes we hope to meet:

• People are more informed about the complex issues surrounding homelessness
• Develop a model for engaging communities in constructive conversations that can be applied to any number of issues they face
• Create an opportunity for participants, through an informed discussion with fellow citizens and experts with diverse views, to make up their own mind on the specific policy issues surrounding homelessness
• Identify and connect people to a wide array of opportunities to impact homelessness in their neighborhoods and throughout the city.

NEIGHBORHOOD DIALOGUES ON HOMELESSNESS

The Institute on the Common Good at Regis University, the Denver Commission to End Homelessness, Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, the Colorado Civic Canopy and the DU Center for Civic Ethics have partnered to develop a project intended to engage people at the neighborhood level in a meaningful dialogue about the causes, impacts and implications of homelessness in our neighborhoods.

Outcomes:

• Neighbors, business owners, homeless providers and the homeless arrive at a better shared understanding about the complex issues of homelessness and its impacts
• Participants develop informed perception about the specific policy issues surrounding homelessness
• People are connected to a wide array of resources, organizations and networks that enable them to have an impact homelessness in their neighborhoods and throughout the city
• A model for engaging communities in constructive conversations is developed that can be applied to other tough issues.

Format

• In various neighborhoods throughout Denver, a small group of ten to fifteen people will meet four times over the course of 6 to 8 weeks
• A host person or organization will convene the group
• Our team will provide agendas, tools, information and a dialogue guide to hosts. Further, we will be available to provide coaching on setting up dialogues.
• Dialogue groups will strive for diversity, and include neighbors, churches, homeless people, business owners and other key voices.
• This effort rests on the belief that given good information and a good process through which values, experiences, and ideas can be shared with others, people will come to a better understanding about homelessness, its implications for our community and steps that we can take to address the challenges it presents.
**Dialogues**
Each convened dialogue will have an overarching theme with a set of materials and questions to support the discussion.

Dialogue #1: The Complexity of Homelessness: Understanding the Diverse Set of Circumstances and People that Comprise Homelessness.


Dialogue #3: Multiple Solutions: Considering the Policy Implications for Homelessness — addressing the systemic patterns vs. personal responsibility and everything in between.

Dialogue #4: Action: Identifying the Actions We Can Take as Individuals and Neighborhoods.
Brining Homelessness Home: Understanding the Diverse Set of Circumstances and People that Comprise Homelessness.

Materials Needed:
• Name tags
• Background information
• Flip chart (if necessary) for ground rules
• Markers
• Refreshments
• DVD Player/ Video on Homelessness

Room set up: Set chairs up in a circle or semi-circle

1. Welcome (5 minutes)

2. Create group ground rules (10 minutes)

3. Introductions and Hopes for the dialogue (15 minutes)

4. Begin the dialogue by showing the homeless video (5 minutes)

5. First Question (25 minutes)
   • What is homelessness? Who is homeless? How did they get there?

6. Second Question (25 minutes)
   • Based on your life experiences, what does homelessness mean for you?
   • How do you respond when you see a homeless person on the street? How do you feel?

7. Optional Third Question (25 minutes)
   • What do you view as the “real” problem(s) behind homelessness?

8. Closing thoughts and reflections (10 minutes)
   • Are there any additional questions or comments that anyone would like to include that have not been addressed?
   • What did we learn tonight?
   • What were some of our key findings?
   • Were there any actions that came out of the conversation?

Tips for the Facilitator
• Urge the participants to share their personal stories and tap into the emotions around the issue

Additional Optional Questions:
• How do you think you arrived at your idea of what homelessness is?
REPORTING TOOL DIALOGUE #1

What were the key learnings of the group at this dialogue?

What potential actions came out our dialogue?

What questions arose that couldn’t be addressed or answered? What is needed to address them?

What are the observations of the facilitator(s)?

Fax to Drew O'Connor at CHUN — 303-830-1782 or email content to drewoconnor@chundenver.org
Homelessness and your Neighborhood: Reflecting on the Realities and Impacts of Homelessness in Our Neighborhoods

Materials Needed:
- Name tags
- Article on Neighborhood response to homeless: “Group plans to rent units to homeless” Rocky Mountain News
- Send participants home with copies of stats/data handout to review before next dialogue- Data/statistics from DENUM
- Background information (notes from previous dialogue)
- Flip chart (if necessary) for ground rules
- Markers
- Refreshments

Room set up: Set chairs up in a circle

1. Welcome/Check-in (5 minutes)

2. Review group ground rules (5 minutes)

3. Reflections from the previous dialogue (15 minutes)
Facilitator will review some of the key points from the previous dialogue and ask:
- What is something that stood out from the last dialogue?
- Was there anything surprising or any “aha” moments for you?
- Have any new thoughts come to mind since you have had time to reflect on the past dialogue?

4. Read article- ask for initial responses to the article (15 minutes)

5. First Question (20 minutes)
- How does the issue of homelessness impact your neighborhood? How are neighbors responding?

6. Second Question (25 minutes)
- How would you feel if low-income housing or a homeless shelter were planned for your neighborhood?

7. Optional Third Question (20 minutes)
- What would it take for a neighborhood to best respond to homelessness? What would that look like?

8. Closing thoughts and reflections (15 minutes)
- Are there any additional questions or comments that anyone would like to include that have not been addressed?
- What did we learn tonight?
- What were some of our key findings?
- Were there any actions that came out of the conversation?

Tips for the facilitator
- Think about the conflicting relationships within the neighborhood.
- What are the various relationships among neighbors?
- How interested or involved are people with the neighborhood around the issue of homelessness?
Additional Optional Questions:

- What are your personal struggles with homelessness in your neighborhood?
- What are the arguments for or against providing services to the homeless?
- People’s feelings towards the homeless can be traced upon a storyline comprising of many micro-stories. These are the stories that people hear, incorporate, and propagate. What are these stories? How are these stories told in the community?
What were the key learnings of the group at this dialogue?

What potential actions came out our dialogue?

What questions arose that couldn’t be addressed or answered? What is needed to address them?

What are the observations of the facilitator(s)?
Plans to harbor homeless alcoholics in a Capitol Hill apartment complex with a history of problems are putting some neighbors on edge but also are being championed by others.

The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless met with several dozen residents Thursday to discuss its plans to provide long-term housing in an apartment building at 1205 Washington St. to 29 homeless people recovering from alcoholism.

Reactions were mixed. Some people endorsed the idea while others expressed worry and fear.

“Our neighborhood has had so many problems with drugs, alcohol, prostitution and homelessness,” said Mark Nachtigal, who has lived in Capitol Hill since 1993. “To put it in this location, I think, is just overloading the neighborhood.”

But James Foy, who lives across the street from the apartment building, predicts the future tenants will want to invest in the neighborhood.

“They have a bigger stake than us already because they’ve beaten the odds,” he said. “People who beat the odds care a lot more.”

John Parvensky, president of the coalition, a nonprofit organization that provides health care, housing and other services to homeless people, said his group and the neighborhood have a shared objective.

“Our goals are really the same,” Parvensky said. “We want to see drug-free housing in that community so we’ll propose to work with the neighborhoods to achieve that.”

Tenants must enroll in a treatment program before moving in and will be required to remain sober.

“We’ll have procedures in place if concerns develop or problems develop so (neighbors will) be able to work with us to get them resolved quickly,” Parvensky said.

The property, which is owned by Uptown Partnership Inc., is at risk of foreclosure, said Marney Mc Cleary, the partnership’s executive director. The coalition will lease the property, renovate the interior and sublease 30 apartments, including one for an on-site property manager. The other seven units in the building will be used for community space.

The coalition expects the lease to be signed next week and for tenants to start moving in next month.

The apartments, Parvensky said, will help keep homeless people off the street.

“Housing is an integral part of that recovery process,” he said. “We need to get them out of that environment and get them in a more supportive environment, and this type of recovery housing can give them that support.”

Larry Dickinson, a recovering alcoholic and drug addict who used to be homeless, said he applauds the coalition’s “noble cause” but worries about the future of Capitol Hill.

“The concern isn’t so much the people living there, but the people who would follow them or they would bring in on a cold night,” he said. “It isn’t just what you put into the building, but what comes along.”
HOMELESSNESS IN DENVER
DATA TO BE USED FOR DIALOGUE #3: HANDOUT TO PARTICIPANTS AT DIALOGUE #2

Point-In-Time (PIT) Survey:
An area-wide survey done at service agencies and on the street to capture data about people who describe themselves as having been homeless on a designated night.

Three Kinds of Homelessness
1. Transitional, First-time Homeless (80% of shelter users)
   a. Result of economics including high housing costs and inadequate income
   b. Stay in shelter system briefly and usually do not return
   c. 112 first-time homeless in 2005 PIT; estimated at 672 annually.

2. Episodic Homeless
   a. Tend to be younger, shuttling between jail, detox, treatment, hospitals.
   b. Require “enriched” transitional housing including treatment for substance abuse, medical issues, and mental health.
   c. Estimated 914 on any given night.

3. Chronic Homeless (50% of shelter resources, 50% of homeless individuals, 35% of homeless families)
   a. Need access to service-enriched permanent housing.
   b. Average of 2 episodes of shelter use, for long periods of time (years).
   c. Tend to be older, with special needs.
   d. Average 942 on any given night, according to 3 years of PIT data.

Who is homeless?
• 50% are members of a family unit.
• 55% of homeless were counted as individuals.
• Average of 343 people live in public places in Denver on any given night.
• 10% of the homeless derive income from panhandling (PIT).
• 22% PIT respondents had permanent work.
• 24% were day laborers.
• 21% are children.
• 162 households spent the PIT night in a motel (17% of 211 callers).
• Half of 211 callers indicate they are living with family/friends.
• The primary source of income for many people who are homeless is Aid to the Needy and Disabled (AND), which was decreased from $269/mo. To $135/mo. By the Colorado General Assembly in 2004.
• 53% of PIT respondents said they had a medical, mental health or substance abuse problem.

1. There are 746,000 people in CO (16.7% of total population) without health insurance. (Denver Health spent $48 million providing services to homeless people in 2003.)
2. Colorado is one of only 3 states in the US that does not cover substance abuse treatment with Medicaid.
3. In 2003, the Mental Health Center of Denver was required to cut 400 clients from its rolls, while at the same time the State Division of Mental Health reduced beds and services at mental health institutions in Pueblo and Ft. Logan.
4. By September 16, 2005 congressional committees have instructions to cut $35 billion from mandatory programs. The healthcare safety net, Medicaid, could be cut by as much as $10 billion. (Also threatened are the Food Stamp and TANF [Temporary Assistance to Needy Families] programs.)

In 2004, the top two caller needs on Mile High United Way’s referral line were for rental assistance (21,200 referrals) and utility bill assistance (12,093 referrals).
The primary causes of homelessness include a lack of income (including loss of work) and lack of affordable, appropriate housing.

- 2000-2004 in Denver:
  - 9% increase in Consumer Price Index
  - 1% growth in incomes
  - 4% increase in rents
  - Natural gas bills have doubled since 2003.
  - Seniors, people with disabilities and the working poor can spend up to 40% of their income on home energy bills, while the typical CO family spends just 5% (Energy Outreach Colorado).

Development in Denver has led to 3,000 Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units being converted or eliminated for condominiums and luxury high-rises.

Subsidized housing in Denver

| 16,482 | 16,482 housing opportunities have deeply subsidized rent (pegged to 30% of income), including Denver Housing Authority, Federal Housing Administration, Shelter + Care units, Section 8 vouchers. |
| 2,812 | 2,812 privately owned units are affordable to very low income households. |
| 743 | 743 transitional housing units (homeless residents can stay up to 2 years). |
| 231 | 231 units targeted to 30% of Area Median Income (Colorado Housing Finance Authority). |
| 20,268 | Total units available |
| **31,377** | **Denver households in need** |
| 11,109 | Additional units needed |
| 22,245 | 22,245 additional at-risk households spend more than 30% of their income on rent |

Costs of Homelessness:

| Ave. monthly cost to shelter an adult: | $775 |
| To shelter a youth (housing & services): | $1,550 |
| Monthly cost of an efficiency apartment in 2004: | $507 |
| Ave. cost for arresting person who is asking for money: | $174 |
| Vacancy rate for studio apts (ave. cost $591): | 8% |
| % of the jail population that is homeless (San Francisco): | 40% |
| Shelter beds in Denver: | 1,358 |
| Additional beds needed: | 1,453 |
| Number of deaths on the street in 2004: | 55 |

*Homeless children are diagnosed with learning disabilities and language impediments twice as often as other kids, and have three times as many emotional & behavioral problems.*

*45% of homeless kids do not attend school on a regular basis; more than ¼ have attended 3 or more schools in a year; children who are homeless are twice as likely to repeat a grade and are suspended twice as often.*
Homelessness and Public Policy: Considering the Policy Implications for Homelessness — addressing the systemic patterns vs. personal responsibility and everything in between.

Materials Needed:
- Name tags
- Background information
- Extra handouts on data and stats from DENUM
- Flip chart (if necessary) for ground rules
- Markers
- Refreshments

Room set up: set chairs up in a circle

1. Welcome/ Check-in (5 minutes)

2. Review group ground rules (5 minutes)

3. Reflections from the previous dialogue (15 minutes)
   - Facilitator will review some of the key points from the previous dialogue and ask:
     - What is something that stood out from the last dialogue?
     - Was there anything surprising or any “aha” moments for you?
     - Have any new thoughts come to mind since you have had time to reflect on the past dialogue?

4. Respond to the data handouts provided at previous dialogue- initial reactions (10 minutes)
   - Think about some questions that may be relevant to the stats
   - What’s jumps out at you from the data? What struck you right away?
   - How does this information relate to your previous knowledge regarding homelessness?
   - What are the underlying questions or ideas in this data?
   - Is there information missing? What data should be here that’s not?

5. First Question (20 minutes)
   - What is society’s obligation to homeless people? Is there an obligation to provide social services to homeless people? Who should be addressing the problem?

6. Second Question (20 minutes)
   - What capacities- emotional, physical, psychological, educational- do individuals need in order to be adequately empowered so as not to become homeless?

7. Optional Third Question (20 minutes)
   - What community capacities— or public policies— need to be in place to prevent homelessness?
8. Closing thoughts and reflections (10 minutes)
   • Are there any additional questions or comments that anyone would like to include that have not been addressed?
   • What did we learn tonight?
   • What were some of our key findings?
   • Were there any actions that came out of the conversation?

Tips for the Facilitator
   • This conversation is designed to directly confront one of the fundamental arguments in relationship to homelessness —
     societal causes vs. personal responsibility. Don’t let people off the hook easy. Make them clarify and own their thoughts
     and point out conflicts in positions. Push people to dig deeper in their analysis.

Additional Optional Questions:
   • If the homeless are to be cared for through voluntary action, what is the individual’s responsibility to participate and help?
   • Even if government takes the primary responsibility, do individuals have a responsibility beyond that of providing revenue through taxation?
   • What, if any, is the responsibility of the homeless person if he/she receives and uses social services, housing, treatment, etc from the govt. and/or private entities?
What were the key learnings of the group at this dialogue?

What potential actions came out of our dialogue?

What questions arose that couldn’t be addressed or answered? What is needed to address them?

What are the observations of the facilitator(s)?

Fax to Drew O’Connor at CHUN — 303-830-1782 or email content to drewoconnor@chundenver.org
What Can We Do to Make a Difference: Identifying the Actions We Can Take as Individuals and Neighborhoods?

Materials Needed:
1. Name tags
2. Background information
3. Self-Sufficiency Standard worksheet, actual figures, and fact sheet
4. Flip chart (if necessary) for ground rules
5. Markers
6. Refreshments

Room set up: Start in a horseshoe and will move to small groups for second half of dialogue

1. Welcome (5 minutes)
2. Review group ground rules (5 minutes)
3. Reflections from the previous dialogue (15 minutes)
   - Facilitator will review some of the key points from the previous dialogue and ask:
   - What is something that stood out from the last dialogue?
   - Was there anything surprising or any “aha” moments for you?
   - Have any new thoughts come to mind since you have had time to reflect on the past dialogue?
4. Begin by completing the “Self-Sufficiency Standard” worksheet (5 minutes)
5. Questions/reflections: (30 minutes)
   - Responses or reactions to the sustainable wage worksheet—what did you think?
   - What was surprising based on your estimates and the actual Self-Sufficiency Standard worksheet?
   - What is the relationship between poverty and homelessness?
   - Split into small groups of 3-5 people—use this second hour to talk about the next steps and action items.
   - On April 4th, 2006 all of the dialogue groups will come together to present their most significant findings and use that collective information to create an action plan.
6. Questions (45 minutes)
   - What are the most important insights you have gained through these dialogues
   - Based on what we have learned, what can we—as a group, or as individuals—do that would make a difference in the face of homelessness?
   - How will we hold each other accountable to the commitments we are making here?
   - Closing thoughts and reflections (15 minutes)
   - Is there a need/desire for the group to meet again before the April 4th meeting?
   - What needs to happen between the final dialogue and the April 4th meeting?

Additional Optional Questions:
- What can you do in your neighborhood to address the problem?
- What are some solutions that have surfaced throughout the previous dialogues that resonate with you?
- How can the institutions within our society that sustain systems of unjustified domination be corrected so as to create more equal opportunities for all American citizens?
- How could we better include homeless people in solutions and in this process?
- What are some questions you have now that you have had this experience?
- Could new or strengthened policies prevent homelessness?
What were the key learnings of the group at this dialogue?

What potential actions came out our dialogue?

What questions arose that couldn’t be addressed or answered? What is needed to address them?

What are the observations of the facilitator(s)?

2004 Estimate of Monthly Costs for a family of one adult, one infant and one preschooler in Denver, CO PMSA

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Monthly Cost Estimates*</th>
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<tr>
<td>Housing (rent for a 2 bedroom apartment, including utilities)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Care (infant and preschool age child)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Food (USDA low-cost food plan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation (assumes car ownership, auto insurance premiums, maintenance, gas, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care (monthly premium and out of pocket costs - assumes employer pays 78 percent of the premium)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous (telephone, diapers, clothing, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hourly Wage</td>
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2004 Actual Monthly Costs for a family of one adult, one infant and one preschooler in Denver, CO

PMSA*  

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<td>Food (USDA low-cost food plan)</td>
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<td>Transportation (assumes automobile ownership, includes insurance, maintenance, gas, oil, etc.)</td>
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<td>Health Care (premium and out of pocket costs- assumes employer pays 78 percent of the premium)</td>
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Join Us in a Dialogue about Homelessness

There are over 10,000 people that are homeless in the Denver Metro area. What causes homelessness? How does it impact our city and neighborhoods? How do you feel when you encounter a homeless person? What can be done about it? These questions and others will guide a conversation about this complicated issue.

Participants in this series of dialogues will include neighbors, churches, business owners, providers of homeless services and those who are (or have been) homeless. This first conversation will focus on our perceptions of homelessness and how it impacts our lives. The three following discussions, which will occur through the month of February, will address its effect on neighborhoods, root causes of homelessness and what we might do together to address the challenges it presents. Come to the first in a series of four dialogues.

Monday, January 23rd, 6pm
Our Savior’s Lutheran Church
915 E. 9th Avenue
Corner of 9th & Emerson

Convened by:
Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods
Capitol Hill United Ministries
Our Savior’s Lutheran
Institute on the Common Good at Regis University
The Colorado Civic Canopy

For more information call the CHUN office at 303-830-1651.
Facilitator’s Resource Packet

The Homeless Dialogue Project
Facilitator’s Introduction

Purposes
To welcome participants into the conversation.
To remind participants about the purpose and spirit of the dialogue.
To say something about roles, schedule, etc., so people know what to expect.

Welcome and restatement of purpose
Say something like . . . .

“Welcome. I’m glad that you decided to participate in this dialogue. It’s likely that each of us has been affected differently by homelessness. I hope this will be a time when you’ll feel fully welcome to speak about your experiences and your views and when you can commit to listening to each other with resilience even when what you hear upsets you. By taking in different views, we may leave with richer and wider perspectives. At least we will understand each other better.”

Schedule and ending time
Say something like . . . .

“Let me tell you a little bit about the flow of the dialogue (Refer to the flow of the meetings on the One Page Description) We’ll begin by making some agreements—that is, we’ll agree on some communication guidelines for our time together.

Then, we’ll have a quick go-round in which you can say something about what led you to participate or what you hope for. Next, we’ll have two go-rounds in which you can respond to 2 questions that I will pose.

Following the go-rounds, we’ll have at least a half hour for less structured conversation in which you can explore connections among your experiences and perspectives. Those connections might take the form of one person asking another person a question. Or they might take the form of simply noting similarities and differences and exploring them a bit further.

Finally, we’ll take time at the end for each of you to say some parting words. We’ll aim to end by (time). Can everyone stay until then?” If people have to leave early, determine how they will leave (e.g., by saying a few parting words or by just getting up to leave quietly) and how you will get their feedback.

Pens and paper
Say something like
“I have made pens and paper available so that you can jot down notes. The pads can help you to listen by giving you a place to hang on to the thoughts that come to you as others are speaking so you can readily return your full attention to listening. The pads also can support making connections in the later part of the dialogue if you use them to jot down themes, differences, similarities, or questions that you may want to explore further.”

Your role
Say something like
“In my role as facilitator, I will guide us through the dialogue and ensure that whatever agreements we make with each other are either followed or renegotiated. If I’ve asked you to speak no more than three minutes and you’ve gone over that time, I’ll signal you. That simply means that I’d like you to complete your thought, not that you need to stop mid-sentence.”

“Finally, if at any point you have concerns about how things are going, please let me know and we’ll work together to figure out how to address those concerns. Can I count on that?”

Source: 1995 Public Conversations Project, Watertown, MA
FACILITATION STYLES:
INQUIRY AND ADVOCACY

Inquiry – A process for understanding another’s point of view by exploring their thinking and reasoning.

Advocacy – A process for attempting to influence another’s point of view by stating one’s opinions/positions and the rationale for those opinions.

Source: Interaction Associates
SUGGESTED AGREEMENTS

Regarding the **spirit** of our speaking and listening,

1. We will speak for ourselves and from our own experience.

2. We will not criticize the views of other participants or attempt to persuade them.

3. We will listen with resilience, “hanging in” when what is said is hard to hear.

Regarding the **form** of our speaking and listening,

1. We will participate within the time frames suggested by the facilitator.

2. We will not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot hear a speaker.

3. We will “pass” if we do not wish to speak.

Source: 1995 Public Conversations Project, Watertown, MA
GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATORS

1. Be compassionate by being flexible not rigid, positive not punitive, inquisitive not judgmental, transparent and human, rather than cryptic and mechanical.

2. Be flexible. Intervene for the well-being and progress of the group. Intervene more frequently at the outset to set precedent for behaviors specified by the agreements. Later, don’t intervene on every infraction. Be alert and flexible.

3. Be positive. Instead of naming infractions, suggest a relevant alternative that is in keeping with the agreements. If someone is taking a lot of air time, you might ask if those who have not spoken would like a chance to speak. If someone speaks in generalities about the experience of others, you might ask, “how did you experience that?”

4. Be genuinely curious about group processes and needs. If there is a dilemma about how to proceed, name it and propose a time-limited conversation about options.

5. Be transparent and human. If you are uncertain about how to respond or what to do, inquire about the ideas and perspectives of your team members and/or the participants.

Source: 1999 Public Conversations Project

DIGGING DEEPER

**Mirror Reflection** — Confirm understanding by repeating the speaker’s words.

**Value-added reflection** — listening intently and trying to articulate the message behind the words. For this moment, it’s like you’re a part of their brain trying to help them gain clarity.

**Pregnant Pause** — Silence is powerful and potentially transformational in a conversation. The space created by silence allows an idea or comment to settle in and have a greater impact.

Adapted from Jim Rough and Associates

CONNECTING THE CONVERSATION

**Note a point of learning**
Point out and note of “aha” moments.

**Pick up and weave a thread**
Help to connect or show similarity between points of view.

**Clarify differences**
Note diverging view points, check to see if points are clear and explore the differences.

**Ask a question**
Help participants state their views by asking clarifying questions.

Adapted from 1995 Public Conversations Project, Watertown, MA
SELF HELP TOOLS FOR PARTICIPANTS
(A tool to hand out to participants)

1. If you feel cut off, say so or override the interruption. (“I’d like to finish...”)

2. If you feel misunderstood, clarify what you mean. (“Let me put this another way...”)

3. If you feel misheard, ask the listener to repeat what she heard you say and affirm or correct her statement.

4. If you feel hurt or disrespected, say so. If possible, describe exactly what you heard or saw that evoked hurt feelings in you. (“When you said x, I felt y...” where “x” refers to specific language.) If it is hard to think of what to say, just say, “OUCH” to flag your reaction.

5. If you feel angry, express the anger directly (e.g., “I felt angry when I heard you say x...”) rather than expressing it or acting it out indirectly (e.g., by trashing another person’s statement or asking a sarcastic or rhetorical question.)

6. If you feel confused, frame a question that seeks clarification or more information. You may prefer to paraphrase what you have heard. (“Are you saying that...?”)

7. If you feel uncomfortable with the process, state your discomfort and check in with the group to see how others are experiencing what is happening. “I’m not comfortable with the tension I’m feeling in the room right now and I’m wondering how others are feeling.” If others share your concerns and you have an idea about what would help, offer that idea. “How about taking a one-minute Time Out to reflect on what we are trying to do together?”

8. If you feel the conversation is going off track, share your perceptions and check in with others. “I thought we were going to discuss x before moving to y, but it seems that we bypassed x and are focusing on y. Is that right?” (If so) “I’d like to get back to x and hear from more people about it.”

Source: 1995 Public Conversations Project, Watertown, MA
CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS IN GROUPS

- Broken Record — Stuck on one point
- Doubting Thomas — Naysayer
- Head Shaker — Nonverbal comments
- Dropout — Disengaged from meeting
- Whisperer — Has side conversations
- Loudmouth — Blarts out each idea
- Attacker — Personal accusations
- Intimidator — Browbeating Controller
- Interpreter — Speaks for others
- Gossiper — Introduces hearsay
- Silent Sam — The non-participant
- Know-it-all — Flaunts expertise
- Backseat Driver — Facilitation critic
- Busybody — Comes and goes from room
- Filibusterer — Master of monologue
- Interrupter — Impatient participant
- Latecomer/ Early leaver
Always start with easier, less intrusive methods to address a challenge. If a problem persists, have a chat with the individual after the meeting. If a situation requires an assertive intervention during the meeting, be sure to remain calm and remind the group of the ground rules. Here are a few quick techniques.....

**Boomerang** — works great for Naysayers by requiring them to come up with answers rather than just saying “it can’t be done”

**Maintain/regain focus** — Literally asking the group to “refocus on the question” can help ground a wandering conversation.

**Name what’s going on** — Sometimes there is conflict or an inability to move forward but it’s not apparent to the group why. Try to identify it to help the group move on. For example, “I think you two are talking about two different things.....”

**Avoid process battles** — Some people want to change the process mid-meeting. Unless it’s really apparent that the agenda and process you’ve got aren’t working, ask to revisit the issue at the end of the meeting to take into account for the next meeting.

**Enforce process agreements** — Refer back to the ground rules to help stay on track.

**Accept — legitimize — deal with — defer** — Accept all ideas. Legitimize all ideas. Determine if the group is in a position to (or wants to) deal with a problem at that time. If not, defer until a later meeting.

**Don’t be defensive** — If you feel yourself getting defensive, you are about to lose control of the group. Remember, it’s not about you but the needs of the group.

**Use appropriate body language** — Sit in open positions, lean forward, use head, face and hand gestures that indicate interest.

**Use humor** — Bar none, the best way to diffuse a tense situation is use humor. Make sure not to overuse, or apply in a way that could be perceived as minimizing an issue.

**Protect others from personal attack** — Behind conflict is usually the good stuff where truth exists. But it can be a fine line between finding the conflicts and letting them get out of control. Protect the people in your group. When things begin to heat up, as a prevention, remind the group of the ground rules. Be ready to assert yourself if someone takes it too far.
LOCATIONS, DATES, TIMES OF SCHEDULED DIALOGUES

Congress Park/South City Park/Capitol Heights - Capitol Heights Presbyterian, 11th & Fillmore; Meeting Dates: Feb 9, 23, March 9, 23; 7pm to 9pm. Contact Rev. Mark Meeks, mkenosha@aol.com, 303-333-9366

Cheesman Park/Capitol Hill — First Unitarian at 14th and Lafayette, Feb 13, 27, March 13, 27; 7pm to 9pm. Contact Betty Wigington, bettywig2000@aol.com. 303-832-6205 and Sally Isaacson and Rev. Eunsang Lee eunsang51@hotmail.com, 303-388-4186.

Country Club/Alamo Placita — Our Savior’s Lutheran at 9th and Emerson; Jan 23, 30, Feb 6, 13; 6pm to 8pm. Contact Bonita and Nelson Bock, bonitarb@aol.com, 303-860-1467 and Rev. John Moorhead, jmooorhead@att.net, 303-860-1272.

Capitol Hill - St. John’s Episcopal Church at 13th and Washington; Feb 27, March 6, 13, 20; 6pm to 8pm. Contact Rev. David Cooper, raincolorado@yahoo.com, 303.355.5665, Rev. Rebecca Crummey rebecca@sjc-den.org, 303-831-7115 or Belinda Lanyk, Belinda.lanyk@denum.org, 303-355-4896.

Capitol Hill/North Capitol Hill — Trinity United Methodist Church at 18th and Broadway; March 3, 10, 17, 24; 7pm to 9pm. Contact Ken Whitney, kcwhit@ecentral.com, 303-340-5898 (home) or Miriam Slejko miriam@talloaks.com, 303-839-1493.

City Park West/Wyman Historic/Uptown — St. Paul United Methodist Church at 16th and Ogden; Feb 7, 21, March 7, 21; 6pm to 8pm. Contact: Laura Folkwein, chumcm@yahoo.com 303-550-2577
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