Task Force Recommendations

The Task Force recognizes that homelessness is the result of failures in the system of housing and services rather than failures of an individual. The unique and complex nature of each person's experience and needs requires a system of supports that is flexible, comprehensive and person-centered. The proposed recommendations from the Task Force are designed to maximize community impact. To ensure effective and structured implementation, these strategies are categorized and assigned to one of three timeframes:

- **Short-term:** Actions achievable within one year or less.
- **Medium-term:** Initiatives requiring one to two years.
- **Long-term:** Efforts extending beyond two years.

While many initiatives will need to be pursued concurrently, this phased approach allows for immediate progress on priority issues while dedicating the necessary time and resources to design and implement systemic, long-term solutions. To maintain clarity, recommendations are outlined within their respective categories and are not repeated across multiple sections, even when they could logically fit in more than one area. This approach avoids redundancy and promotes focused action.

Recommendations also include complementary initiatives to build upon, along with potential funding sources. While some funding application deadlines have passed, they are included to demonstrate historically available opportunities. While the future availability of similar programs is uncertain, these funding sources could be available in future years.

Strategy 1: Focus on Housing As The Solution To Homelessness

The Task Force recognizes that lack of housing is the cause of homelessness and ensuring a sufficient supply of housing is available to meet the individual needs of everyone is the fundamental and permanent solution. Augusta is currently facing a shortage of housing, including affordable housing, though the exact number of units needed has yet to be fully determined. MaineHousing estimates that an additional 873 affordable housing units are necessary to meet present demand in Augusta, including 424 units specifically allocated for older adults.[1] Additionally,

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[1] Cover, S. (2024). Augusta gets community development grant to boost Malta Street senior housing project.
https://spectrumlocalnews.com/me/maine/housing/2024/06/19/maine-housing

the Housing Production Needs Study forecasts that Kennebec County will require between 9,100 to 9,700 housing units by 2030 to address future demand.[2]

	Recommendations	Details	Timeframe
1.1	Conduct a Comprehensive Assessment of Augusta's Housing Stock & Opportunities	- Work with city planning and development staff and the Augusta Housing Authority to create a full scope of updated assessment needed. - Inventory existing and upcoming affordable housing by size, location, and type. Be sure to include supportive housing. - Identify city-owned underutilized land and buildings for potential development. - Assess affordable units at risk of losing restrictions within 10 years. - Estimate unmet housing demand by type, program, and tenant population, including by income-level.	Short-term
1.2	Create Housing Production Goals	- Set housing production goals based on needs data obtained through 1.1. - Integrate goals into city planning and development priorities. - Consider a review of planning board approval process to ensure that projects are approved based on their conformance with city development goals outlined in the comprehensive plan or other city documents. - Assign an individual or team to manage and update housing data at least every five years. - Share data with key stakeholders to support regional alignment.	Short-term
1.3	Expand Low-Barrier Housing Solutions	- City staff and elected officials should demonstrate visible support for the development of low-barrier supportive housing for special populations such as those experiencing chronic homelessness. - Encourage intentional development aligned with identified supportive housing needs such as housing that supports chronically homeless or other special groups.	Medium-term
1.4	Streamline Access to Existing Housing	Launch programs that reduce stigma around those exiting homelessness including a landlord education campaign and landlord liaison program. This should be done in partnership with coordinated entry and area service	Medium-Term

	Recommendations	Details	Timeframe
		providers to provide outreach, community meetings, and online resources that support landlords.	
		• Establish a staff position within the City to help identify and coordinate area resources, advance task force recommendations, and bring in outside agency support to navigate individuals and families from homelessness to housing.	
	Complementary Initiatives to Build Upon	❖ State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study ❖ City of Augusta 2023 Comprehensive Plan ❖ MaineHousing, Rent Smart Program	
	Potential Funding	❖ MaineHousing, 2024 Housing First Request for Qualifications: Funding for site-based Housing First Programs. *Application deadline 3/6/2025 (extended from original deadline of 1/16/2025)* ❖ MaineHousing, Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program: Funding for affordable housing. 2025-2026 QAP. *Pre-application deadline 7/3/2025 (2026 round)* ❖ Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston, Affordable Housing Program: Funding for affordable housing. *Application deadline 7/17/2025* ❖ MaineHousing, Supportive Housing Program: Funding for Permanent Supportive Housing. 2024 RFP. *Most recent application deadline 9/26/2024* ❖ MCoC, 2024 RFP: Funding for affordable housing and related services for people experiencing homelessness. *Most recent application deadline 9/30/2024*	

STRATEGY 2: DEEPEN POLICY IMPACT THROUGH LEADERSHIP

Municipal leadership and staff are critical to ending and preventing homelessness. They are priority-setters and can eliminate system barriers, coordinate resources, disseminate information, and provide advocacy and technical assistance. By strengthening advocacy efforts, the City can drive meaningful policy changes, secure critical resources, and promote a more inclusive and supportive community.

	Recommendations	Details	Timeframe	Priority
2.1	**Adopt Supportive Zoning and Land Use Policies**	• Complete a comprehensive review of all zoning, land use and other ordinances to identify barriers and opportunities to housing and shelter development.	Short-term	

		• Advance needed changes resulting from review above. Consider additional density bonuses such as height bonuses and reduced parking requirements for affordable housing projects. • Through collaboration between city staff and area service providers, establish permitted zones or overlay districts where shelters are allowed by-right rather than as a conditional use. Consider staffing ratios or other requirements as part of the process. • Consider waving or reducing permit fees for affordable housing or shelter development. • Ensure city staff and elected officials, including members of the planning board, receive continued education about development types and housing finance as they relate to the role and scope of city processes and approvals.	
2.2	**Lead with Decisive Policy & Advocacy**	• Adopt a core community belief statement through formal council action, that all people should have a place to stay at night, shelter from adverse weather conditions during the day and access to services that support those experiencing homelessness. • Elected officials and staff should lead the way through demonstrated, proactive support that includes advocating for, seeking out and taking the lead on policies and funding that address homelessness and expand services, housing and housing programs. • Through existing staff and leadership, take the initiator and coordinator role in bringing additional funding for housing and services to the City and support funding applications for area service and housing providers and developers. • Consider addressing homelessness through a public health framework, both focused on the health of individuals experiencing homelessness and the broader community. • Oppose policies at all levels of government that harm individuals by prolonging or causing experiences of homelessness. • Ensure city leadership engages in state and community discussions for long-term solutions and regional collaboration.	Short-term
2.3	**Research Becoming a CDBG Entitlement Community**	• Explore potential Congressional paths to becoming a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Community.	Medium-term

		Details	Timeframe
2.4	**Incentivize Affordable Housing Development**	• Actively market Augusta to affordable housing developers. • Expand the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds to assist developers with predevelopment costs related to the development of affordable housing or emergency shelter. • Provide financial assistance through city or outside resources for sewer and water line extensions and road construction assistance. • Investigate providing loan guarantees to affordable housing developers. • Using online City resources, be a connector to training and technical assistance that increases private development capacity.	Medium-term
	Complementary Initiatives to Build Upon	❖ A Roadmap for the Future of Housing Production in Maine ❖ City of Augusta 2023 Comprehensive Plan ❖ City of Augusta Policy Development Recommendations	
	Potential Funding	❖ Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD), CDBG: Funding for planning, community and economic development projects. 2025 Application Package. *Housing Assistance Letter of Intent deadline March 21, 2025* ❖ City of Augusta, TIF Program	

STRATEGY 3: IMPROVE REAL-TIME DATA

Use data to inform decisions and identify areas for system improvement. Rather than creating a brand-new data collection system, the Task Force recommends investigating whether the Hub 6 Coordinator can enhance current data collection processes. The role of the Hub Coordinator is meant to focus on convening and facilitating cross-agency collaborative teams, collecting and analyzing real-time data, tracking performance metrics for the Hub, managing the Coordinated Entry System, and driving systemic improvements to better serve individuals experiencing homelessness.

	Recommendations	Details	Timeframe
3.1	**Improve Data Collection**	• Ensure all emergency shelters and warming centers track bed availability, utilization, and lengths of stay to allow a better understanding of shelter capacity and need. • Work with providers to improve tracking of people who are housed to identify individuals at risk of homelessness and prioritize interventions before housing instability occurs. • Improve the data of people who are unsheltered to better identify unmet resource needs and barriers to accessing housing and shelter.	Short-term

		• Improve data collection within the Augusta Police and Fire/Rescue Departments to track the number of calls, time and costs related to unsheltered homelessness within the City.	
3.2	**Increase Data Accessibility**	• Enhance coordinated decision-making, by encouraging all providers to participate in Coordinated Entry, ensuring that data is centralized, kept updated, and is accessible to stakeholders. • For any competitive City funding or land development opportunities that have a goal of engaging homeless service providers or solving homelessness, consider adding threshold or other scoring criteria that reward current or future-committed participation in the Coordinated Entry System.	Short-term
3.3	**Monitor Data**	• Measure outcome to continuously improve community responses.	Short-term
	Complementary Initiatives to Build Upon	❖ Community Solutions, Built For Zero ❖ City of Portland, Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee	

STRATEGY 4: SYNCHRONIZE RESOURCE COORDINATION & COMMUNICATION

While Augusta has a strong foundation of community-wide services available to individuals experiencing homelessness, resource gaps remain. Enhancing participation in the Coordinated Entry System among agencies presents an opportunity to strengthen this network.

	Recommendations	Details	Timeframe
4.1	**Foster Cross-Agency, Multi-Sector Collaboration**	• Support a dedicated committee to better coordinate homeless services, including members from city leadership, key city departments (e.g., Public Safety, Community Services), regional representatives, hospitals, service provider organizations, and community groups. • Designate a leader to oversee committee operations. Evaluate whether to integrate this committee under the Hub 6 Coordinated Entry System (CES) or other existing working groups vs. operating independently. • Hold regular multi-sector meetings to ensure continuous alignment with a goal of closing gaps in hours of operation, transportation and services provided. • Break down silos between agencies to facilitate transparent data exchange and collective learning. Ex. Assist in creation of master release	Short-term

		for sharing of information across providers in compliance with ethical and legal standards. • Ensure City participates in Maine CoC Diversion Committee.	
4.2	**Engage the Community**	• Consider creation of a landing page on the City website to link landlords, business owners, providers and community members to resources. • Create a feedback loop for local residents and business owners to stay engaged in discussions and initiatives that address homelessness. • Include people who are unhoused in the continued development and evaluation of solutions.	Short-term
4.3	**Expand Access to Financial Resources**	• Focus on initiatives that help individuals and families remain housed, preventing the inflow into homelessness. • Increase flexibility and availability of time-limited financial support for rent, utilities, and security deposits. • Simplify and streamline access to financial resources through a centralized resource.	Short-term
	Complementary Initiatives to Build Upon	❖ Bridging the Gap, Centralized Helping Fund ❖ Maine Housing Search ❖ MaineHousing, Rent Smart Program ❖ 211 Maine - Resource Directory	
	Potential Funding	❖ John T. Gorman Foundation, Direct Services Grants: Program funding for basic needs supports and services. *Application deadline 3/25/2025.* ❖ MaineHousing, Long-Term Solutions to Assist People Experiencing Homelessness: Funding to prevent and end homelessness. *Last application deadline 9/30/2024.* *Recent Grants List* ❖ *MaineHousing, Housing Problem Solving Program: Funding for training, program operating expenses, direct client assistance for current ESHAP recipients.* 2025 Program Guide	

❤ STRATEGY 5: MAKE SHELTERS AND TRANSPORTATION A PATHWAY TO HOUSING & SUPPORT

While permanent housing is the ultimate goal, temporary shelter offers a safe and effective way to engage individuals, providing a pathway to stable housing and supportive services.

	Recommendations	**Details**	**Timeframe**
5.1	**Increase Year-Round Emergency Shelter**	• Increase emergency shelter capacity to meet need and ensure any new shelter space is available 24/7 year-round and is low barrier.	Short-term

		• Explore and support maximizing use of existing City resources such as general assistance and/or creating new allocations to expand low-barrier overnight shelter to year-round operation as necessary to meet the need. • If a separate, new shelter is warranted vs. expansion of existing shelter, encourage developers/operators with service models that include wraparound services either onsite or within close walking distance. • Encourage shelter developers/operators to engage the community proactively throughout the planning process of any new emergency shelter. This could include holding neighborhood meetings and listening sessions.	
5.2	**Treat People with Dignity and Respect**	• Ensure interim shelter strategies promote dignity, respect, and pathways to permanent housing. • Address unique needs of people with chronic and acute health conditions.	Short-term
5.3	**Reduce Unsheltered Homelessness**	• Prioritize encampment closure based on health and safety factors. • Continue to limit criminalizing homelessness. Only clear encampments when shelter space and/or housing is available. • Empower community outreach teams to engage people staying outside. • The City should identify ways to reduce barriers to transitioning out of homelessness by undertaking or supporting initiatives that provide free storage, a place to receive mail and laundry facilities.	Short-term
5.4	**Increase Access to Transportation**	• Ensure that individuals experiencing homelessness are centered in broad conversations about increasing public transportation options, e.g. bicycle programs, car repair funds, bussing, etc.	
	Complementary Initiatives to Build Upon	❖ Ending Homeless Encampments in Maine ❖ Maine's Plan to End & Prevent Homelessness ❖ 19 Strategies for Communities to Address Encampments Humanely and Effectively	
	Potential Funding	❖ MaineHousing, Emergency Shelter and Housing Assistance Program (ESHAP): Funding for shelter operations, housing stabilization, Stability Through Engagement Program Vouchers (STEP), Home to Stay Housing Choice Vouchers (HTS HCV). Most recent application was due 11/20/2024. 2025 Program Guide	

- ❖ **MaineHousing, Housing Problem Solving (HPS)**: Funding for training, program operating expenses, direct client assistance (available to ESHAP grantees). 2025 Program Guide
- ❖ **MaineHousing, Targeted Rapid Rehousing Program (TRRP)**: Funding for housing relocation & stabilization, direct client assistance, landlord incentives. 2025 Program Guide.
- ❖ MaineHousing, Warming Shelter Grants: Funding from the State's Emergency Relief Fund. 2024 Grant List.