

*Maine*  
Cumberland **County**  
POSITION PAPER FOR AGENDA ITEM

<b>TO:</b>	Board of County Commissioners
<b>FROM:</b>	Sandra Warren
<b>DATE:</b>	June 28, 2024
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Lakes Region Homeless Needs Study

**Requested Action:**

Informational Report-No Action

**Background & Purpose of Request:**

Cumberland County Staff and Commissioners have heard anecdotal information for many years that the needs of Lakes Region families and individuals who are at risk of homelessness or currently unhoused are not being adequately addressed. In order to get a better sense of those needs and how to address them, the County hired a consultant to complete a Lakes Region Homeless Needs study. For the purposes of this study, the Lakes Region includes the following towns: Baldwin, Bridgton, Casco, Gray, Naples, Raymond, Sebago, Standish, and Windham.

The consultant, Levine Planning Strategies, teamed up with HSRI and Northstar Planning to create a report which includes the following tasks:

Task 1: Data and Background Review

Conduct an environmental scan to develop an understanding of homelessness in the greater Lakes Region of Maine and an understanding of the services, resources, and housing available and needed by people and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the greater Lakes Region. The scan will include the review and analysis of existing data (e.g., Homeless Management Information System, Point-in-Time count, Housing Inventory Count, Census data) and reports obtained from Tedford Housing, Maine Housing, and housing and service providers in the study area.

Task 2: Prepare a Housing Profile of Five Lakes Region Towns

Prepare a town-by-town housing profile of the nine towns identified. This profile will include details on the quantity and type of housing available in each community and the affordability of existing housing stock. Data on short-term rentals, housing quality, mobile homes and demographic characteristics of current residents will also be provided if available. This work will be based on generally available data from the U.S. Census, local comprehensive plans, and Maine Housing. Additional data from communities and service providers, if available, will also be utilized in this housing profile task. Any information on individuals experiencing homelessness in these towns will be included in this data, if available from local sources.

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Task 3: Stakeholder Interviews

Conduct approximately between 15 to 20 interviews with housing and service providers and other stakeholders to understand service and housing needs and preferences for an approach for the provision of services and housing within the greater Lakes Region. Stakeholder interviews will be conducted in person or by phone or video conference, as appropriate, and may be conducted with individuals or small groups. Conduct up to two focus groups with people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to understand their needs and preferences for housing and support services. Conduct up to two community listening sessions to understand housing and service needs in the greater Lakes Region. The consultant will include stakeholders from the greater Lakes Region, including the towns of Baldwin, Casco, Naples, Raymond, Sebago, plus Standish, Windham, and Bridgton. The consultant will work closely with the County and Tedford Housing to identify the stakeholders to be interviewed and potential locations for the focus groups and community listening sessions.

Task 4: Needs Assessment

Based on likely demographics of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the study area, determine specific needs of the population, likelihood of receiving services elsewhere, and potential need within the study area for homeless services. The consultant will also complete a housing needs assessment of the greater Lakes Region towns, with a focus on the needs of those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing homelessness. The information will be provided for low- income households, senior citizens and disabled residents, as data is available.

Task 5: Complementary Services

Outline existing and desired complementary components to a strategy, including supportive housing and permanent rental options and on-going supportive services for people transitioning out of the service center.

Task 6: Siting and Land Use Analysis

Based on identified needs for homeless and homeless prevention services, evaluate potential locations for service center or centers. Explore zoning and other land use restrictions to three potential sites for homeless services. Outline potential changes that would be needed to make these locations feasible. Explore other potential barriers to development of these facilities, including community impact, environmental factors, accessibility, and existence of complementary services. If needed, outline order-of-magnitude costs to acquire development rights to preferred sites(s) and construct facility/facilities. Outline order-of-magnitude operating costs.

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Task 7: Present Recommendations

Present initial recommendations for implementation steps based on the findings of the study. Public meetings or presentations to Cumberland County and individual towns will occur prior to issuing a final report.

Task 8: Final Report

Develop final report outlining work in the study and recommendations for next steps for Cumberland County and partners. The consultant will produce actionable recommendations for addressing gaps and needs and that can be used to inform the development of service center or centers in the greater Lakes Region in Maine.

**Presentation:** Jeff Levine of Levine Planning Strategies will present to the Commissioners some key findings and an update on the status of the various tasks in the Lakes Region Homeless Services Study.

**Funding Amount and Source:**

This study was funded using \$115,000.00 of ARPA funds.

**Effective Date:**

N/A – this is an informational report; an effective date will take place once the full report is reviewed and by the Commissioners at a later date.

**Attachments:**

Draft- Interim Report of the Lakes Region Homeless Services Study.

\*It is important to note that final report will include comments and suggested changes by county staff, Commissioners, and some key stakeholders. The final report will also make the format of the various tasks more consistent.