



Strategic Plan | FY2020-2022

Because every child deserves a home

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MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Mission

We are a partnership of congregations and community organizations responding to the crisis of children and their families who are homeless. We work to eliminate homelessness in Greater Indianapolis.

Vision

A community where family homelessness is rare, short-lived, and recoverable.

The day that all Hoosier families who are homeless are sheltered on the day they become homeless, because homelessness is not an option for any family, especially those with children.

Values

Interfaith cooperation: While our beliefs vary, our motivation for what we do is rooted in spiritual faith and a profound call to service. This allows us bridge our differences for the sake of helping others without proselytization.

Keeping families together: We believe families should stay together—not be separated—during the most difficult times in their lives...*no matter the makeup of a family.*

Changing lives: While we will provide assistance to meet emergency needs, it is more important that we provide access to skill development, resources, and networks to create lasting stability.

Hospitality: We try to generously give of ourselves in addition to our resources. We believe a warm welcome and compassionate service are keys to replacing despair with dignity.

Good stewardship: We serve almost twice as many families per dollar invested as traditional shelters because we have 1,000+ unpaid volunteers utilizing a network of in-kind facilities. Because children and their families are in crisis, every dollar needs to count.

Raising awareness: We believe the reason for homelessness is poverty, and part of the cause is systemic. Said more simply, opportunities are not equal. It is not enough to help a family without asking ourselves and neighbors why there is a need in the first place.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Family Promise of Greater Indianapolis (FPGI), founded in 1994, operates a homeless shelter program (Interfaith Hospitality Network, or IHN) and a follow-up program (AfterCare), utilizing 1,500 volunteers from 60 congregations. The programs have the highest permanent housing rate and lowest homelessness relapse rate in Indianapolis. However, on the occasion of the organization's 25th anniversary, the Indianapolis community still finds a crisis of family homelessness overwhelming the shelter system with 10 families calling each day for help.

New information shows Indianapolis has disproportionate eviction numbers. The city was second in the nation in total eviction judgments in 2016. Indianapolis had almost twice as many evictions as Chicago, despite just one-third of their population.

This strategic plan is an attempt to creatively reassess how FPGI operates, to not only expand its interventions and successful housing rate, but also address systemic causes of the demand for shelter through addressing landlord-tenant law.

The plan calls for continuing all current programs, and adding the following new initiatives:

- Expand into a new program area called “Awareness & Policy” to see legislation passed at the city and state level to help curb evictions.
- Expand shelter capacity by 50% by FY2023, but not through recruiting new hosting congregations. Instead, FPGI will lease four apartments in the name of FPGI to be used as shelters. This first-in-the-nation model is actually 30% more economical than a traditional shelter because there is no second or third-shift staff needed, and food preparation costs.
- Reduce the average length of stay for families to 30 days or less by FY2023 utilizing two funds:
 - Create a Landlord Mitigation Fund to reimburse landlords for eviction costs (up to \$1,500/eviction) if waiving eligibility requirements to accept as a tenant a family FPGI refers, allowing families with obstacles to secure housing faster.
 - Expand the Family Assistance Fund to help families secure move-in costs faster, and to prevent evictions for families in the AfterCare program.

These goals will be supported by the following resource development initiatives:

- Exhaustively market and expand the new monthly donor group—the Housewarmers—to 100 members at an average gift of at least \$30/month.
- Market FPGI's new endowment to secure planned gifts (e.g., bequests).
- Replace the spring Walking for Dreams event with a spring Bed Race.
- Build new relationships with Indianapolis' largest funders.

Although models grow and adapt, the values do not. FPGI still seeks to creatively use existing resources, to keep a family together regardless of makeup, to foster interfaith cooperation, and to be a long-term solution rooted in relationship and hospitality.

INTRODUCTION

Family Promise of Greater Indianapolis (FPGI) was pleased in 2019 to celebrate the milestone of its 25th anniversary of helping families experiencing homelessness to obtain and retain housing. There were more than 1,000 families served by the programs the past two-and-a-half decades, with more than 70% consistently securing housing. Since 1994, the organization has worked to eliminate homelessness in Greater Indianapolis. The organization began with a single shelter program—the Interfaith Hospitality Network—but expanded in 2014 to include AfterCare, a follow-up program for families upon securing permanent housing. On December 31, 2018, more than 88% of families who had left the shelter program to their own permanent housing in the past two years had not returned to the Indianapolis shelter system. These are the best housing rate and housing retention rate for any family shelter in Indianapolis, according to the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention’s (CHIP’s) Outcomes Report for ESG-Funded Projects (January 2019).¹

However, for any nonprofit organization, the milestone of a 25th anniversary is also a time to ask why its long-term existence is necessary, and what, if anything, can be to make that not the case. Celebrating the longevity of an organization that seeks *to end* a social ill can risk the perception (or at worst, the reality) that the organization’s existence has become the end and not the means. This silver milestone needs to be a time of recommitment to the creativity, innovation, and blank-canvas thinking that led to the establishment of the mission in the first place. FPGI’s case management team is supposed to respond to housing emergencies, but also get to the root cause of why crises like homelessness exist in a family’s life. Our organization needs to continually do the same for our local community, especially as social problems like family homelessness not only persist but grow in magnitude.

This strategic plan seeks to do just that. In 2019, the Board of Directors, without paid consultants, asked if and how Family Promise could remain relevant to effect greater change for families going through homelessness in the community, while staying true to its values. Seeking input from families served, volunteers, and other agencies, they set achievable and measurable goals through which the organization and its programs can grow or even expand. The Board also reviewed the Indianapolis Plan to End Homelessness by 2023 to align with its goals as much as possible.

What follows is the result of the reviews, discussions, and client/stakeholder input. The goals follow the categories of the challenges and opportunities identified, and a board level committee is established to oversee and execute each section: program and services, congregational relationships, awareness and policy, and resource development. This plan seeks to establish the criteria for successful growth while coordinating the timing of the implementation of goals. Different stakeholders consisting of existing staff, new staff, and board-level committees are responsible for each objective. This plan can be considered a living document as it is revisited every quarter at board meetings and in staff performance evaluations, with goal or timeline changes being proposed annually. It includes an organizational

¹ This report is not publicly available, but is prepared for the City of Indianapolis’ Department of Metropolitan Development by CHIP. Homeless service agencies that receive U.S. Housing and Urban Development funding through the City began meeting quarterly in 2018 to review this outcomes report.

analysis, a summary of the goals, and a description of objectives for each goal with dates for completion. The plan covers the fiscal years 2020 to 2022, which all start on January 1 of the respective year.

REVIEW & ANALYSIS

Awareness & Policy

When the organization's last strategic plan was written in FY2017, Family Promise of Greater Indianapolis (FPGI) received 10.1 calls per day on average from families requesting shelter. This call volume has not changed. Family shelters in Indianapolis are always at capacity and are not serving the full shelter demand. The local Homeless Initiative Program (HIP), operated by HealthNet, has case managers report having to send families to stay in an emergency room at night or walk around a 24-hour Wal-Mart while their children are taken into a local respite facility, simply because no family shelters have space. In winter, the call volume counter-intuitively decreases to approximately five calls per day, when family is less likely to kick out their relatives with children, or when tax refunds are received from the Earned Income Tax Credit. In summer, though, after the tax refund checks are spent and school is out of session, there have been weeks where FPGI received 30 calls every day from families seeking shelter, as recently as 2019.

However, these are not unique calls day to day. Some callers are families who called the day before, or the entire week before. The true shelter capacity needed remains unknown. Currently, families seeking shelter can call shelters directly or they can call 2-1-1 to be referred to a shelter, and 2-1-1 has access to an online system (as of January 2018) to book screening appointments for shelters when an opening is listed.² Because there is no single door entry model for shelters, the community cannot count unique callers to know the demand for family shelter rooms. FPGI began a pilot in December 2018 to *only* accept callers referred directly from 2-1-1 operators to test the effectiveness of a single-door shelter entry model. It was successful in that the shelter's occupancy did not decline, and 2-1-1 was a reliable referral source.

If all shelters would participate in a single door shelter entry model, Indianapolis could know the true demand for family shelter in its community, and would be able to calculate expansion needs. It would also help those seeking shelter to know there exists a single point of entry to turn to for help.

Perhaps equally important is acknowledgement of the fact that shelter demand is a dynamic, not static, statistic. When family shelter capacity expands in Indianapolis, it is likely that more people from out-of-town, even neighboring states, will seek to relocate to Indianapolis for shelter and housing assistance—families that currently call once or twice, find out shelters are consistently full and do not take reservations, and then stop calling. Having an accurate and real time measure of the demand for shelter is therefore not just ideal but imperative. Even more important potentially is having a flexible shelter provision model too. For example, responding to increases in shelter demand with a three-year capital campaign to expand capacity, only to have demand decrease due to an economic recovery in year two, could prove a clumsy and ineffective way to reliably yet cost-effectively meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

² The 2-1-1 number is commonly described as “9-1-1, but for social services.” Individuals in Indiana (and other states, too) can call it to learn about and be referred to human resources from addiction programs to food pantries. To learn more about the 2-1-1 line (legally known as Connect2Help 2-1-1), visit www.connect2help211.org.

A quick explanatory note: While there does exist a Point-In-Time Count (PIT) mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)—this is where Indianapolis agencies walk the streets one night in January to count those experiencing homelessness—that count uses HUD’s definition for homelessness, which does not include those families who might be “doubled-up” (i.e., couch-surfing with two or three families in one apartment, but with two weeks allowed before the landlord evicts for a lease violation). According to that count, Indianapolis’ shelter capacity is much closer to meeting the demand. However, “doubled-up” families are still eligible for shelter, and therefore the PIT does not accurately measure the demand in family shelters. Federal legislative efforts have tackled changing the HUD definition of homeless to include “doubled-up” individuals and families for decades, but always unsuccessfully. What administration wants their re-election campaign attacked with television ads claiming they tripled the homeless population over night (even if that is not truly the case because it was a definitional change)?

While measurement of the shelter demand matters, the more imperative question is, Why is there such high demand for family shelters in Indianapolis? Some light was brought to that question in early 2018 when The Eviction Lab at Princeton University released the results of a city-by-city comparison of more than 83 million eviction records. It found that in 2016, next to New York City, Indianapolis had the second highest number of evictions. In fact, Indianapolis had more evictions than Chicago, Los Angeles, and Topeka combined. Indianapolis had almost twice as many evictions as Chicago, despite having one-third of its population. Thirty-one households each day were evicted in Indianapolis, and more than 6,000 annually.³

Why does Indianapolis have such a high eviction count, especially compared to other cities? The fact that the state of Indiana has three cities (Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, and South Bend) in the top 20 cities with the worst eviction rates (i.e., evictions *per capita*) strongly suggests that it might be due to landlord-friendly state laws regarding renting property. There is no guarantee of counsel for tenants in an eviction hearing like there is a public defender in criminal cases in Indiana. There is no escrow tenants can pay rent to in order to compel repairs, and withholding any rent is a breach of the lease. There is no provision allowing the small claims courts to oversee payment plan arrangements to give tenants the opportunity to pay-to-stay in their housing unit with judicial supervision. In fact, FPGI staff who have sat for hours waiting for their client’s eviction case to be heard in the docket, have reported that fewer than 10% of tenants have attorneys, and even worse, in almost half of the cases observed, the tenant does not even show up to court.

The Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP) has already begun researching the cause for these alarming statistics in Indianapolis in partnership with an institute at local university. Other agencies already began proposing policy reforms in the state legislature in early 2019, although with bills not even receiving a committee hearing, let alone a vote. Most importantly, though, the eviction problem is receiving more and more media attention, with stories in the *Indianapolis Business Journal*, on WFYI’s *No Limits*, and more.

While the landlord-tenant laws and eviction hearings may be unbalanced, the root cause of family homelessness is arguably the lack of affordable housing. In 1960, housing costs were approximately one-third of a household’s expenses. In fact, the United States Official Poverty Thresholds began in that decade (and still are today) based on the correct assumption for that time that a household spent about

³ Matthew Desmond, Ashley Gromis, Lavar Edmonds, James Hendrickson, Katie Krywokulski, Lillian Leung, and Adam Porton. Eviction Lab National Database: Version 1.0. Princeton: Princeton University, 2018, www.evictionlab.org.

one-third of its income on food (another third on housing), and to calculate the threshold simply multiplied a typical household's food costs by three. However, since the 1960s, while the price of housing and rent has increased almost twice as much as inflation, while food and wages have kept pace with inflation. Rents have not only increased, but they have increased at an increasing rate year to year, especially since 1980.⁴

Most of the rental apartments considered “affordable” in Indianapolis that accept a tenant from a shelter (i.e., a tenant who probably has at least one eviction, probably with an outstanding rental debt), charge \$600-700 for a two-bedroom apartment.⁵ That tenant, assuming they can secure a full-time job that pays \$10.00/hour (remember that minimum wage in Indiana has been \$7.25/hour since 2015), will spend more than 50% of their net income on rent and utilities. Without supports like SNAP benefits (i.e. food stamps), childcare vouchers, or the refundable Earned Income Tax Credit, they would not last two months in housing in most cases. Even with those benefits, more than 90% of families leaving FPGI's shelter program to housing without government subsidy fall behind in rent in the first six months of their lease term.

Public housing support does exist in Indianapolis. However, it is in short supply. The Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV, but commonly referred to by its former name, Section 8) has such a long waitlist, that the waitlist is closed for almost 360 days of the year. A client of FPGI who was approved for a housing choice voucher (HCV) in 2018 had spent 18 years on the waitlist.⁶ Public housing developments accept applications regularly, but FPGI clients report waiting eight to twelve months to be eligible for a unit. By then, moving into the unit will often mean breaking a lease, transferring children's schools or daycares, or other transition stresses. Additionally, if a unit in public housing becomes available, it is most probable that it is because another family was evicted from public housing, thus having little to no effect on the net shelter demand.

An astute reader might ask why a prevention program—something championed by HUD—is not described here or pursued by Family Promise. The cost-effectiveness of such a program is well-documented, as a \$600 one-time rent support could keep a family housed and prevent a \$6,000 shelter stay. However, that prevention system is already administered in Indiana through the township trustees offices, though there is little to no oversight or accountability to how the “poor relief” funds codified by the state legislature are managed. CHIP is researching prevention programs and the Indianapolis Continuum of Care (see detailed explanation below) is expanding prevention programming in Indianapolis. FPGI might leave this area of program development to other agencies, as FPGI's greatest asset to contribute to any initiative is its base of 1,500 congregational volunteers. However, FPGI has had success in helping families retain permanent housing after leaving the shelter through the creation of a Family Assistance Fund in 2016 that expanded to include support for families in AfterCare in 2018.

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index: Rent of Primary Residence in U.S. City Average, All Urban Consumers [CUUR0000SEHA], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CUUR0000SEHA>, September 18, 2019.

⁵ Empirically, there are 2-bedroom units in Indianapolis that will rent for \$450-\$600 without subsidy, but they either do not provide refrigerators and stove/ovens in the unit (necessitating often a rental cost for appliances), or they have been found to consistently not meet the state codes by FPGI staff during walk throughs.

⁶ When accessing the Indianapolis Housing Agency's *Frequently Asked Questions* about Housing Choice Vouchers page on September 18, 2019, it read, “The Indianapolis Housing Agency's Section 8 waiting list is closed. We are now processing the randomly selected applications from our 2016 Lottery opening, which concluded on September 15, 2016. Future waitlist openings will be publicly announced in advance through the usual media outlets and on Indyhousing.org.”

Congregational Relationships

Family Promise of Greater Indianapolis (FPGI) has existed thanks to the generosity of numerous sponsoring and hosting religious congregations. Currently, more than sixty congregations are in relationship with the program as sponsors—the most in the organization’s history. These congregations are principally located in Indianapolis (especially the north side), with 20% in southern Hamilton and Boone Counties. They represent numerous Christian denominations and independent churches, along with two Jewish temples, one Unitarian house of worship, and a Hindu service group.

The congregations form the backbone of the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) (see Program Model below), utilizing more than 1,500 volunteers to cook meals, set up beds, drive vans, wash sheets, sleep overnight, plan children’s activities, and more. However, in addition to the 1,500 volunteers, the 60 congregations represent more than 30,000 residents of Greater Indianapolis who attend worship services at least monthly at these houses of worship.

Congregation participation in the IHN has increased to allow the shelter model to serve eight families every night of the year (two congregations each night are “hosting” four families), but unfortunately, congregation membership overall is trending downward. Some Catholic and mainstream Protestant denominations have seen almost 30% decreases in membership in the last two decades.⁷ Decreasing even more rapidly at these congregations is the revenue for operations that are donated or tithed. Though FPGI’s identity was born from the faith community and desires it to continue and strengthen, it would be naïve to ignore these patterns for future planning. All congregations report decreasing ministry and outreach budgets to support agencies like Family Promise, even though certain congregational pledges have increased in the last three years (i.e., FPGI has received a larger share of a decreasing budget, due to engagement, increased confidence, or other unknown factor). Furthermore, two congregations left IHN in 2019 due to the aging of the membership, and a constant theme of discussion at coordinator meetings is difficulties recruiting volunteers, especially for van driving and overnight shifts.

Any future planning with the faith community needs to realistically account for the fact that in ten years, the volunteer support may not be able to be as intensive, and the financial support may decrease even sooner than that. Additionally, future initiatives need to always realize that the hallmark of this program is the 25,000-member base of potential support all around Indianapolis. This asset is something unique to Family Promise amongst other homeless service providers, and positions FPGI in a place with great potential for wraparound support of clients, and also for raising awareness or even effecting change on key policies.

Program Model & Service Delivery

Interfaith Hospitality Network: Family Promise of Greater Indianapolis is known to its stakeholders for its hallmark program, the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN). This program model utilizes a network of congregations to provide shelter for families experiencing homelessness. The program has made tremendous strides in the past three years. The average geographical distance traveled by the families to and from the congregations has decreased considerably with successful outreach efforts to

⁷ Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape”

congregations in the same neighborhood as the FPGI Day Center—where families can spend the day if not working or in school. Two congregations host every night of the year now that a 17-week hosting gap is filled, increasing the number of families served by the program. Last, a Family Assistance Fund was created at \$40,000/year and has expanded to more than \$85,000/year as a budget line item to help families secure housing faster, retain housing, and even help the IHN program break down barriers created by its congregational model by providing after hours transportation to and from work for heads of households.

These efforts have led to FPGI consistently holding the highest housing rate for family shelters in Indianapolis; however, there are still challenges with the program. First, expanding capacity is difficult because the congregations recruited only allow the program to maintain its current capacity (see Congregational Relationships above). Additionally, the Day Center does not have space for more families to be served, nor for increased staff. Second, the congregation model solves housing and food instability for families, but adds transportation and schedule stress. Families moving week to week adds another variable for a family in crisis to juggle, while adding the extra morning travel from congregations to the Day Center in the morning to catch a 6:00 A.M. school bus creates the need to adjust the sleep schedule to earlier hours in the evening—a change that not every family easily makes. Third, volunteer efforts are financially beneficial because they allow the program to serve twice as many families per dollar invested as a traditional shelter, but when the in-kind food donation cost is added to a valuation of volunteer time spent cooking, cleaning, laundering, driving, and sleeping overnight, it begs the question of if there is a more effective way to engage volunteers towards achieving housing outcomes instead of providing basic needs.

Last, in 2018 the average length of stay was 47 days for a family in the shelter. The Indianapolis Community Plan to End Homelessness calls for the length of stay to be shorter than 30 days by 2023. The best comparable family shelter in Indianapolis has an average length of stay of 35 days. The aggravating factors identified by case managers that lengthen a family's stay are 1) obtaining landlord approval for tenancy when a family has an eviction, 2) the length of time it takes for a high-vulnerability family to get approved for housing assistance from the Coordinated Entry program, and 3) the difficulty for a single parent to find a job where the hours match the schedule of daycares (e.g., overnight, weekend, and early morning shifts).

FPGI's IHN program currently does not offer formal programming to families in the shelter. Other affiliates in the nation offer parenting classes, job readiness or housing readiness lessons, and financial literacy workshops. IHN has not invested resources in formal classes for two reasons: 1) Difficulties coordinating classes with families needing to work and provide childcare, 2) A desire to place all energy in helping house a family as quickly as possible to reduce any trauma from a shelter stay, especially on children. This is not to say education work is not done; in fact, it is. IHN has used the strategy to do it through individual one-on-one assistance or through referrals to agency partners, like Dress for Success for interview skills. However, the case manager's time is limited. AfterCare provides an opportunity for the ongoing education.

Coordinated Entry: The IHN program has grown in its role as a member of the Indianapolis Continuum of Care (CoC). The CoC is a HUD-mandated body that organizes under an elected council, with members consisting of homeless service providers, funders, formerly homeless individuals, public officials, and more. They jointly receive HUD funding annually to alleviate homelessness in Indianapolis (FPGI has not participated in the joint application for funding, and to date, has not received funding from any CoC

application). In the past two years, the CoC launched a Coordinated Entry System (CES) into housing, where a common housing application is completed by trained navigators at homeless service provider agencies (including FPGI), homeless candidates for housing are prioritized, and financial support and ongoing case management is provided based on vulnerability. One program providing up to 18 months of case management and some financial assistance is called Rapid Re-housing, and it serves families of medium vulnerability. Families of high vulnerability can receive help from programs called Permanent Supportive Housing. This could be a permanent housing unit in a building with follow-up services in-house, or a housing choice voucher with ongoing home-based case management so the family can find their own apartment or house.

Since beginning participation in this system two years ago, response improved in early 2019 to where approximately 25% of families in the IHN shelter program received housing support through the Coordinated Entry System managed by CHIP. Because these families receive ongoing case management from other agencies, they are not enrolled into FPGI's AfterCare program so as not to duplicate services, and to maintain a manageable census in the AfterCare program with just one full-time case manager. As Coordinated Entry improves, it is expected that the long-term housing stability of the families leaving shelter will improve. However, the challenge—as with so much in social services—is that the CES is under-resourced. The families who do qualify for assistance from the CES, often will wait 30 days before they are assigned a housing manager, and then the inspections and administrative steps required by HUD can delay the process another 30 or more days, meaning the shelter stay is *at least* 60 days for most families placed into housing by the CES.

AfterCare: FPGI is one of few shelters with home-based case management (i.e., AfterCare) for families after they leave successfully. The program has successfully provided case management to help families build capacity (e.g., education, health, financial literacy) and capital (e.g., better employment, savings, improved credit score, restoring social/familial relationships) to retain housing. It is a customized program based on each family's unique needs and housing retention plan.

AfterCare has had a lot of success in helping families retain housing thanks to strong case management, the expansion of the Family Assistance Fund to include emergency financial support for AfterCare families, and leveraging other agency support as well. Its limitations are that it is staff-driven voluntary program. Although the first AfterCare graduation was held in May 2019 and one month's rent awarded to the five graduates, there are still few tangible incentives outside of the growth from case management to retain families. Half of the families exit the program between six months to a year. That does not mean it is assumed there should be other incentives, but that is a question worth addressing. Additionally, there may be opportunities for congregation volunteers to engage with families after their shelter stay, and a few congregations have expressed a desire to do so.

New Apartment Model: In January of 2019, FPGI was hosting a family whose behaviors were stressful for a volunteer-driven model, but yet the family could not fit in other shelters, and had already been dismissed from other shelters already. FPGI rented a four-bedroom apartment in its own name for 90 days so this large family with chronic homelessness could still be “in a shelter” while it waited to be approved for housing assistance through the Coordinated Entry System. Although there were many challenges, the family today has housing through the CES for the first time in four years.

This one-time creative solution led to staff asking, Why do big family shelter buildings exist? Why don't agencies just rent and furnish apartments around town, then move families directly into them for up to 90 days until they secure their own place to stay?

The quick answer is cost. The assumption is large family shelters housing 14 to 22 families in one building is more economical to serve the most families per dollar invested.

That does not appear to be true. When this apartment-shelter experiment's costs were extrapolated for a hypothetical program with *fourteen* apartments rented and furnished (including 15% for administration and fundraising)—the same capacity as a local traditional family shelter—the total annual operating cost was more than 30% *lower* than the expenses on that local shelter's most recent Form 990.

Where would all the savings come from to make this model more economical? An interview with another director of a local family shelter helped provide answers. One answer was staffing. First, big shelter buildings necessitate a community living arrangement with community spaces. Such living arrangements lead to constant monitoring of behaviors and environment, like keeping extra toilet paper under lock and key, requesting music not be played, and making sure parents are with kids at all times. Such monitoring leads to investments in second and third-shift (i.e., overnight) staffing. Second, community living requires professional food preparation. Such food preparation leads to even more investments in ingredients, kitchenware, compliance and certifications, and staffing.

If families lived independently in private units, they regain the dignity of getting their own toilet paper out of the closet, of working overtime and trusting their 16-year old to watch his 5-year old sister, and of cooking their own food (after all, in Indiana, families still receive SNAP benefits—i.e., food stamps—while in shelter).

The cost is not the only potential benefit. Family shelters in Indianapolis have a collective permanent housing rate (i.e., success rate) of just more than 43% (see note about CHIP Quarterly Outcomes Report for ESG-funded Shelters in "Awareness" above). Families report being dismissed from other shelters for serious safety concerns from interpersonal conflicts more common in community-living environments like shelters, to repeated infractions of non-safety related policies like curfew violations. This new model of shelter could substantially reduce such dismissals for interpersonal conflicts and rule violations (not to mention decrease staff stress and time spent on such things), and therefore potentially increase the permanent housing rate of families in shelters.

However, there are obvious threats to this model for which preparation is needed. First, without consistent monitoring by staff, there risks a lesser urgency to get things done. Families could feel settled. Second, discussions with families currently in the shelter program revealed that strict guidelines regarding visitors, overnight guests, and drug/alcohol use would not only need to be established, but also enforced routinely. There would have to be policies around planned and random inspections, and it might be best to separate that function from the case management role.

A model using an apartment as a shelter could be piloted with congregation support in a more housing-focused way, and with less intensive labor to meet basic needs. Congregations could partner to work with a family for a longer time than a week of their shelter stay, but less intensely to compensate. A small group of volunteers could join them weekly for a small meal to build relationships or social capital. Volunteers could take the family to Goodwill their first weekend for clothes or emergency supplies. Volunteers could help the family move out their final weekend. These tasks are all currently done by case management staff. Volunteers—to reduce facility costs—could then help clean and prepare the

apartment for the next family, who would then be supported by the next congregation in line. Perhaps congregations could sponsor an apartment-shelter together, including some financial support, rotating between them which congregational team supports which family, or for what month at a time.

Resource Development

As Family Promise of Greater Indianapolis (FPGI) has increased its shelter capacity from 40 to 70 families served each year, while consistently serving 20-25 families in the AfterCare program, revenue has not had to increase dollar-for-dollar due to scale economies. The operating budget of FPGI grew from approximately \$350,000/year in FY2016 to \$500,000/year in FY2019, while six months of operating expenses have been held in case reserves (about \$250,000). While congregation and public (I.e., City of Indianapolis) support has remained steady just under \$100,000/year and \$30,000/year respectively, the large increase is due to three successes: 1) expanding the income from the Home Sweet Home fundraiser from \$60,000/year to \$120,000/year; 2) new \$40,000/year and \$25,000/year partnerships with the Gayman-Davis Shoemaker Fund, a fund of Central Indiana Community Foundation and the David P. Sheetz Foundation respectively for a Family Assistance Fund; and 3) increasing the individual and foundation donor base through new outreach and major donor cultivation/stewardship.

Any program expansions would have to be funded by new fundraising strategies. However, there are many opportunities for revenue growth. First, a monthly donor group called the Housewarmers was started in June 2019 to provide recurring and predictable support for the AfterCare program. As this group grows, the support from a late spring event that previously funded AfterCare can now be used to fund new projects or program expansions. Second, the late spring event, previously Walking for Dreams, had peaked at grossing \$39,000, without a lot of room for expansion due to the lack of success in recruiting new supporters and sponsors. Other Family Promise affiliates have had great success executing a “bed race” event, recruiting racing teams not only from participating congregations, but also from local companies, membership associations, and more. Third, Family Promise—despite its program success—still is not recognized as a leader in the field by some of Central Indiana’s largest private funders. Establishing and building relationships there can be a source of transformational support, as for example, the largest local private foundation recently gave \$1,000,000; \$5,000,000; and \$10,000,000 gifts to almost every shelter in Indianapolis *except* Family Promise.⁸ Last, the congregations still have many people who are not aware of what Family Promise is or its impact. Developing ways to make the mission known to those who do not volunteer could lead to increased support, especially offering the state tax credits through the Neighborhood Assistance Program as an incentive to give.

Family Promise established an endowment with \$25,000 in seed money in June of 2019, and it is operated by Central Indiana Community Foundation. The Board of Directors decided to market the new endowment as intended only for planned gifts, so as not to cannibalize existing annual support from the operating budget where it is still needed. Given the median age of the volunteers who serve in the IHN program—the most passionate supporters of FPGI’s mission—is higher than 65, creating awareness of this endowment could have the potential to yield planned gifts, but not with any certainty or immediacy that lets planning be based on it. As a note for clergy and congregation leadership, a nonprofit agency’s endowment is not expected to compete with congregation endowment funds for planned gifts, as when discussed by the FPGI Board of Directors, religious support and nonprofit support were seen by each

⁸ See Lilly Endowment Inc.’s press release about the transformational gifts here:

<https://lillyendowment.org/news/grants-to-fund-financial-sustainability-of-human-services-organizations/>

member as different buckets or line items from the household budget, or even a legacy budget for someone's estate.

Organizational Capacity

There are other organizational factors that need to be considered in the setting of goals, even if not explicitly represented in those goals. First, the Board of Directors is largely made up of representatives of hosting congregations who each have volunteered with the IHN program. This deep personal experience with the programs of FPGI has allowed for board members to be engaged with the organization at the highest level possible, something craved by other nonprofit organizations. While the current membership is committed and generous, there is room to expand the board and benefit from diverse membership, ensuring discussions around direction and policy consider as many perspectives as possible. This latter intentional recruitment should be considered simultaneously with investments in diversity and inclusion training to help with board retention as its membership becomes more diverse.

Board-level committees will be formed at the annual board retreat in January for each of the goal areas of this strategic plan. The board-level committee will have responsibility for ensuring the goals and objectives are reached. Board members will be recruited with a committee in mind that aligns with their passion and expertise, as new goal areas (e.g., "Awareness & Policy") contain new frontiers for the organization and require specialized expertise.

Second, much of the operations of FPGI is highly specialized, even more than comparable shelters, given the unique IHN model. Therefore, staff turnover is highly disruptive to smooth operations, especially without a succession plan. Unfortunately, given the stress involved in the field, staff turnover is not rare. All current staff positions are evaluated to be operating at maximum capacity, and burnout is a huge risk. All efforts need to be taken to ensure adequate staffing, retain key staff, and to plan transitions so any impact on operations is minimized for the sake of the families served.

Last, volunteers are numerous and generous, but they are already asked to do many initiatives including hosting families, clothing drives, holiday gifts, urgent need response, not to mention fundraisers like Home Sweet Home. To prevent fatigue, it is important to further emphasize the need for new partners, while also focusing on the initiatives that help families achieve the most lasting change and reduced risk of future homelessness.

SUMMARY OF GOALS

Awareness & Policy

- 1) Help secure the passage of legislation by FY2023 to provide legal counsel in Indianapolis for tenants facing eviction in small claims court.
- 2) Help secure the passage of legislation by FY2023 to provide the ability of tenants to deposit rent in a City-approved escrow account to compel repairs to their unit by the landlord.
- 3) Recruit at least two family shelters in addition to Family Promise to operate using a single door shelter entry system for families seeking shelter by FY2023.

Program Model & Service Delivery

- 4) Increase shelter capacity by 50% by 2023 through a new apartment-based model that utilizes congregations in a less labor-intensive way, conditional on success of pilot model in 2020.
- 5) Decrease the average length of stay in shelter to under 30 days, while maintaining a 70% or higher permanent housing rate and a shelter relapse rate at two years of less than 15%.

Resource Development

- 6) Recruit 100 Housewarmers at an average gift of \$30/month to fully fund AfterCare with recurring support by December 31, 2020.
- 7) Redesign a spring special event to raise a surplus of \$30,000 in FY2020, \$55,000 in FY2021, and \$80,000 in FY2022 to fund and sustain two units of an apartment-shelter model.
- 8) Maintain the Family Assistance Fund at \$85,000/year to serve families in shelter, while leveraging support from other agencies and trustees to serve families' in AfterCare financial emergencies.
- 9) Secure three letters of intent for planned gifts to the FPGI Endowment in each of FY2020, FY2021, and FY2022.

Congregational & Stakeholder Relationships

- 10) Recruit two new hosting congregations annually to maintain two full hosting rotations in the IHN program.
- 11) Recruit three new sponsoring congregations annually to participate financially in a special event or through an annual contribution.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Awareness & Policy

Goal 1) Help secure the passage of legislation by FY2023 to provide legal counsel in Indianapolis for tenants facing eviction in small claims court.

Task 1: Research potential organizations with capacity to lobby for legislation at the city level, select potential partners, and establish relationship by June 30, 2020.

Task 2: Collect stories of evictions and the lives they affect, providing stories and statistics as needed to lobbying partner and through mass media (ongoing).

Task 3: Follow lead of lobbying partner to get proposed legislation passed, including meeting with City officials and organizing email, letter, and phone support amongst constituents if necessary until legislation becomes law.

Task 4: Ensure partner invests in and executes a marketing plan to see awareness of the new services shared with low-income populations in Indianapolis.

Goal 2) Help secure the passage of legislation by FY2023 to provide the ability of tenants to deposit rent in a City-approved escrow account to compel repairs to their unit by the landlord.

Task 1: Research potential organizations with capacity to lobby for legislation at the state level, select potential partners, and establish relationship by June 30, 2020.

Task 2: Collect stories of evictions and the lives they affect, providing stories and statistics as needed to lobbying partner and through mass media (ongoing).

Task 3: Follow lead of lobbying partner to get proposed legislation passed, including meeting with state officials and organizing email, letter, and phone support amongst constituents if necessary until legislation becomes law.

Task 4: Ensure partner invests in and executes a marketing plan to see awareness of the new law shared with low-income populations in Indianapolis.

Goal 3) Recruit at least two family shelters in addition to Family Promise to operate using a single door shelter entry system for families seeking shelter by December 31, 2021.

Task 1: In conjunction with the Indianapolis Continuum of Care, re-form the Family Homelessness Working Group (FHWG) by December 31, 2020.

Task 2: Advocate with the City of Indianapolis to see funding incentives built into Emergency Solutions Grant application process for shelters that participate in a single door shelter entry system.

Task 3: Meet with executive directors in FY2020 to present results/impact from FPGI's pilot of the single-referral system, requesting they try the pilot for 30 days.

Task 4: Do follow-up presentations with Connect2Help 2-1-1 personnel at the FHWG in FY2021.

Program Model & Service Delivery

Goal 4) Increase shelter capacity by 50% (i.e., four apartments) by FY2023 through a new apartment-based model that utilizes congregations in a less labor-intensive way, conditional on success of pilot model in 2020.

Objective 1: Open and manage one apartment rented in FPGI's name to be used as an emergency family shelter by July 1, 2020.

Task 1: Create sponsoring guidelines in Winter 2020, send to congregations, and present to any interested parties.

Task 2: Hold training meeting with congregational coordinators in Spring 2019 from the three chosen congregations for sponsorship.

Task 3: Apply for \$50,000 start-up funds from private foundations/funders (specifically United Way of Central Indiana and Central Indiana Community Foundation) in Fall 2019.

Task 4: If funding secured, promote IHN case manager to program manager, hire full-time Day Center assistant, and secure MSW practicum student for the IHN program to free executive director from daily IHN responsibilities.

Task 5: Secure apartment by July 1, 2020 and furnish through Mustard Seed of Central Indiana and congregation support.

Task 6: Utilize existing IHN case manager for intakes and AfterCare case manager for case management (with performance bonuses). Day Center assistant would be responsible for apartment inspection (ongoing).

Objective 2: Open and manage additional (i.e., second) apartment rented in FPGI's name to be used as an emergency family shelter by July 1, 2021, conditional on success of pilot in FY2020.

Repeat tasks 1 to 5, assessing and expanding staffing and updating this plan as necessary.

Objective 3: Open and manage two additional (i.e., third and fourth) apartments rented in FPGI's name to be used as an emergency family shelter by July 1, 2022.

Repeat tasks 1 to 5 above, but applying to Impact 100, Lilly Endowment Inc., Faith & Action Project, United Way of Central Indiana, and other major funders for partnership to expand the pilot to a full program with four apartments in a step-down funding model that allows sustaining support to be raised in FY2023-FY2025.

Goal 5) Decrease the average length of stay in shelter to under 30 days, while maintaining a 70% or higher permanent housing rate and a shelter relapse rate at two years of less than 15%.

Objective 1: Establish a Landlord Mitigation Fund of \$20,000 through foundation funding to cover the costs of an eviction for a family referred by FPGI up to \$1,500.00.

Task 1: Secure foundation funding by January 1, 2020.

Task 2: Sign memoranda of understanding by June 30, 2020 with 15 landlords of 50 or more units each expressing that if they waive their eligibility criteria to approve FPGI families for tenancy, FPGI will cover the cost of an eviction in the first lease term up to \$1,500.00.

Objective 2: Increase the family threshold on January 1, 2020 for Family Assistance Fund assistance to \$2,000/family from \$1,000 if the family is not likely to be served by the Coordinated Entry System, allowing the shelter program to pay rent and security deposit for a family once housing is secured.

Resource Development

Goal 6) Recruit 100 Housewarmers at an average gift of \$30/month to fully fund AfterCare with recurring support by December 31, 2020.

Task 1: Create incentives for the spring fundraiser based on Housewarmer member sign-ups.

Task 2: Do an annual spring email and direct mail campaign leading up to the spring event asking readers to consider joining Housewarmers.

Task 3: Contact each donor from the previous year by phone or personal email asking if they would sign up as a recurring donor instead.

Goal 7) Redesign a spring special event to raise a surplus of \$30,000 in FY2020, \$55,000 in FY2021, and \$80,000 in FY2022 to fund and sustain two units of an apartment-shelter model.

Task 1: Form a new committee to create and design for a Spring Bed Race event in May of each year, beginning in FY2020 at an in-kind location to be determined by the committee.

Task 2: Recruit a title sponsor for the event to cover the costs of the event, encouraging a three-year partnership by February 2020.

Task 3: Create a list of corporate and congregation partners, and mail outreach packets to the list asking them to join the event with a race team.

Task 4: Create incentives and sponsorships that decrease a race team's race time or increase an opposing team's race time.

Task 5: Secure a grand prize, and give at the race.

Note: This event would replace the Annual Meeting and Walking for Dreams for the future.

Goal 8) Maintain the Family Assistance Fund at \$85,000/year to serve families in shelter, while leveraging support from other agencies and trustees to serve families' in AfterCare financial emergencies.

Task 1: Maintain partnerships with the Gayman-Davis Shoemaker Fund (\$40,000/year) and the David P. Sheetz Foundation (\$25,000/year) through sharing impact of fund at least quarterly.

Task 2: Recruit a new funding partner at \$10,000/year by October 1, 2020.

Task 3: Recruit another new funding partner at \$10,000/year by October 1, 2021.

Task 4: Recruit another new funding partner at \$10,000/year by October 1, 2022.

Goal 9) Secure three letters of intent for planned gifts to the FPGI Endowment in each of FY2020, FY2021, and FY2022.

Task 1: Create a webpage marketing the endowment and explaining how to make a planned gift by June 30, 2020.

Task 2: Add endowment announcements to at least two e-newsletters and the annual December direct mail in FY2020 and repeat each year.

Congregational & Stakeholder Relationships

Goal 10) Recruit two new hosting congregations annually to maintain two full hosting rotations in the IHN program.

Task 1: Hold an annual Congregation Interest Meeting in June of each year, with phone, email, and mail outreach to all congregations in Marion County. Follow-up as necessary.

Task 2: Recognize existing congregations annually through the events, email, and social media.

Goal 11) Recruit three new sponsoring congregations annually to participate financially in a special event or through an annual contribution (see tasks immediately above).

CONCLUSION

Family Promise of Greater Indianapolis, for 25 years, has led a quiet, interfaith, and highly effective effort to get children into homes. Family homelessness is unacceptable, and after working one family at a time for 25 years, the organization begins here to attempt to address some of the root causes in our larger community that have made shelters like FPGI turn away families due to capacity for 25 years.

With investments of energy and effort to change public policy, combined with piloting a new innovative model that provides perhaps the most dignity-preserving shelter experience for children in the nation, major steps are being taken in FY2020-2022 to see the vision of FPGI and of its community come to fruition: That homelessness be rare, short-lived, and recoverable.

The reason that rang true in 1994 still rings true today...

Because every child deserves a home.