Strategic Planning Community Meeting

One of the strategic planning meetings convened the Committee Concerned for Housing in Greater Flint, Michigan. The committee included state and local organizations as well as city government and United Way. The committee wanted to create a partnership to focus their collective efforts on creating a unified, inter-organizational approach to the serious housing and homelessness issues facing the city. The meeting was open to those in the area who were interested in developing an integrated community approach for the creation of sufficient, safe, affordable housing.

The strategic planning session first focused on collecting the group’s views on the characteristics of a healthy community. The result of this discussion, from a housing provider’s point of view, is shown in the graphic below, “Characteristics of a Healthy Community”. Developing this graphic helped the participants place their interests in healthy housing within the larger context of a healthy community.

Second, the group identified the Characteristics of a Healthy Housing System. This discussion helped the group begin to establish a common vision for desired housing in Genesee County. It also helped them begin to examine how each of a variety of related services can fit into a larger system of services by many interconnected organizations. This realization establishes part of the foundation needed to begin creating a common vision and distinguishing the role of each of the partners in achieving that vision.
Third, the group arranged a discussion facilitated by Outreach Partnerships staff with approximately 225 homeless people in Flint. The homeless participants were asked for their views of what “healthy” homeless services would look like, what they thought providers thought about them, and what they recommended for consideration by the provider agencies.

Finally, after the results of the conversation with homeless consumers were tabulated, the providers were assembled and asked the same questions. They were then shown the results from the consumers and asked to identify the similarities and differences in what consumers said and what they thought consumers would say.

While the responses were similar in many ways, the consumers understandably focused more on the detail of services and the providers more on systemic issues. However, the consumers talked about their strengths while providers, by and large, did not. The consumers noted the skills in the room that were largely unused by providers and emphasized that they themselves were a support group and referral service for one another. When they heard about resources that were available, they passed the word around.

Detailed collaborative planning is now underway by a group of approximately 65 provider representatives. An action plan based on the findings is under development. It is significant to note that most of their plans involve doing things together and with their consumers in different ways. It is expected that very few new resources will be needed to put these plans in place. For the most part, they are interested in finding new ways to do what they do, not in adding new programs to existing practices.