

# Cooper House Impact Report

A Study of the Impact of Housing  
North Dakota's Chronically Homeless Population



CPAs & BUSINESS ADVISORS

# Cooper House Impact Report & Cost Study

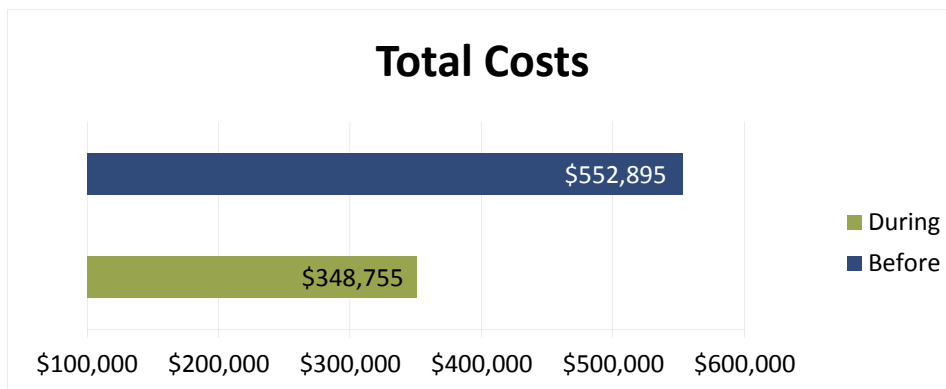
Eide Bailly was engaged by the Fargo Housing & Redevelopment Authority (FHRA) to compile cost data for a group of residents of Cooper House, a supportive housing for the homeless project managed by FHRA. We have compiled data showing the costs to society prior to when these people secured housing at Cooper House and then 12 months during their time housed at Cooper House. Because people move in and out not all dates line up over the same time frame. We have attempted to collect data showing 12 months prior to being housed at Cooper House and during their stay at Cooper House. We have not audited, reviewed or tested this information beyond simple due diligence while collecting it.

## Background:

Cooper House opened in Fargo, ND in May of 2010. The Cooper House apartment's provide permanent supportive housing for homeless persons and is a stabilizing next step in the lives of people coming out of shelters or transitional housing programs. It consists of 42 apartments, 32 of which are efficiencies and 10 are one bedroom units. The apartments are rented exclusively to individuals who are documented as homeless. Preferences are given to those experiencing chronic or long-term homelessness, veterans, and people with disabilities. Homeless is defined as an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Chronic or long-term homelessness is considered to be anyone being homeless for 12 consecutive months or 4 times in the past 3 years.

Mental Health Technicians are on staff 24 hours, seven days a week at Cooper House, and a part time Licensed Addiction Counselor and a full time Case Manager are in the building daily, working with the clients and offering needed services. Family Health Care Center provides a part time nurse on site who provides medication management, infection control, health assessment, and referrals and follow up.

Cooper House employs a "Housing First" hybrid model, where people are provided a home first and then are offered a variety of services to help improve their lives and keep them in housing.



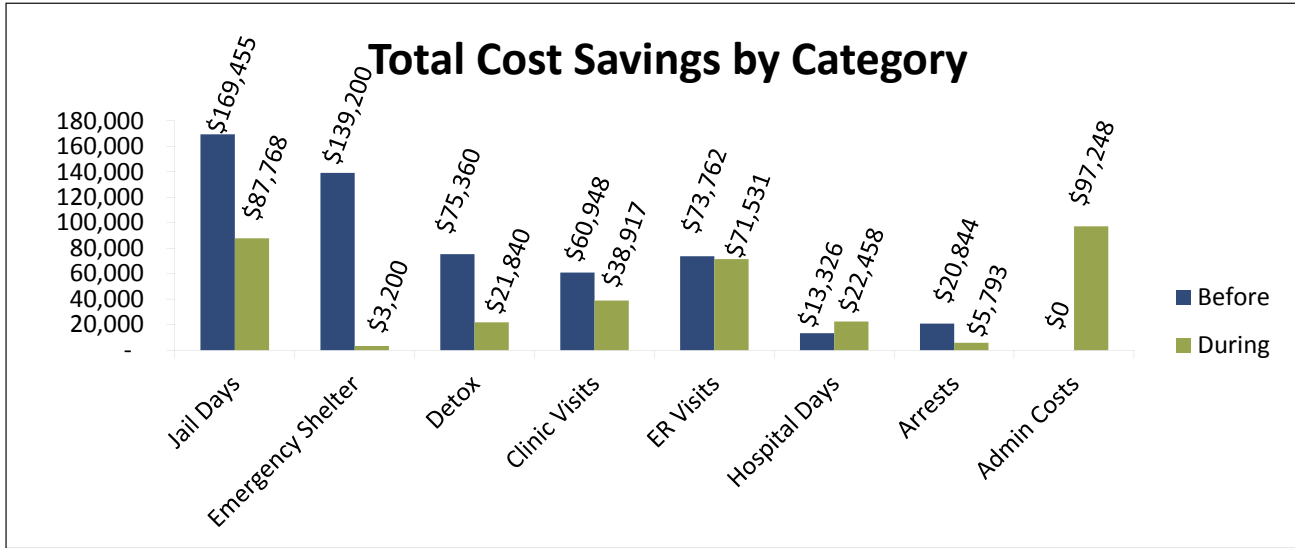
## Conclusion:

Based on the results from the cost study, it is evident that housing the chronically homeless is "the smart way to do the right thing." There was a total of \$204,140 savings in costs for those who lived at Cooper House for the time period that this study was conducted, through October 31, 2011. Being proactive in helping the homeless population is shown to help save the tax payers money and to make the community a better place to live.

## The Study:

This study is meant to be a snapshot of the impact of housing North Dakota's chronically homeless population. The data of this study was collected with the consent of 66 tenants (the Study Group) who have lived at Cooper House at various times since it opened. Area service providers, shelters, law enforcement, the court system, and healthcare providers have all cooperated in providing the information gathered throughout this study. Once the information was consolidated then an average per person per month cost was calculated and this was used to calculate the group average.

Below is an overview of the costs comparisons for a one year period prior to being housed and a one year period ending October 31, 2011.



*Note: There are two significant public cost drivers not captured by this study. Those of the judicial system which includes all costs related to court processing, arrests, and those costs related to state hospital days attributed to court ordered rehab. For some individuals this was up to dozens of times prior to living at Cooper House.*

**Healthcare & Medical Costs:**

Based on the information received from Sanford Hospital, the Cost Study Group, costs went from \$148,036 to \$132,906 for a 10% decrease in costs or a savings of \$15,130. The healthcare and medical cost data was compiled through October of 2011.

**Law Enforcement & Legal costs:**

Based on the information received from the Fargo Police Department, the cost associated with arrests declined from \$21,000 to \$6,000, which resulted in a decrease of \$15,000, or 72%. The jail day costs were reduced from \$170,000 to \$87,800 for an \$81,687 or 48% decrease.

Overall, legal and law enforcement saw a cost savings of \$96,738 for those living at Cooper House, with some individuals having 100 less jail days than before they were homeless. The law enforcement and legal cost data was compiled through October of 2011.

**Detox Costs:**

Based on the information received from the Fargo Police Department, the average cost per detox visit is \$120, not accounting for police officers time to collect and transport individuals to the facility. The total cost for detox visits decreased from \$75,360 to \$21,840. For the Cost Study Group, this is a cost savings of 71% or \$53,520. In addition, this particular Study Group has seen 446 fewer visits. The detox cost data was compiled through October of 2011.

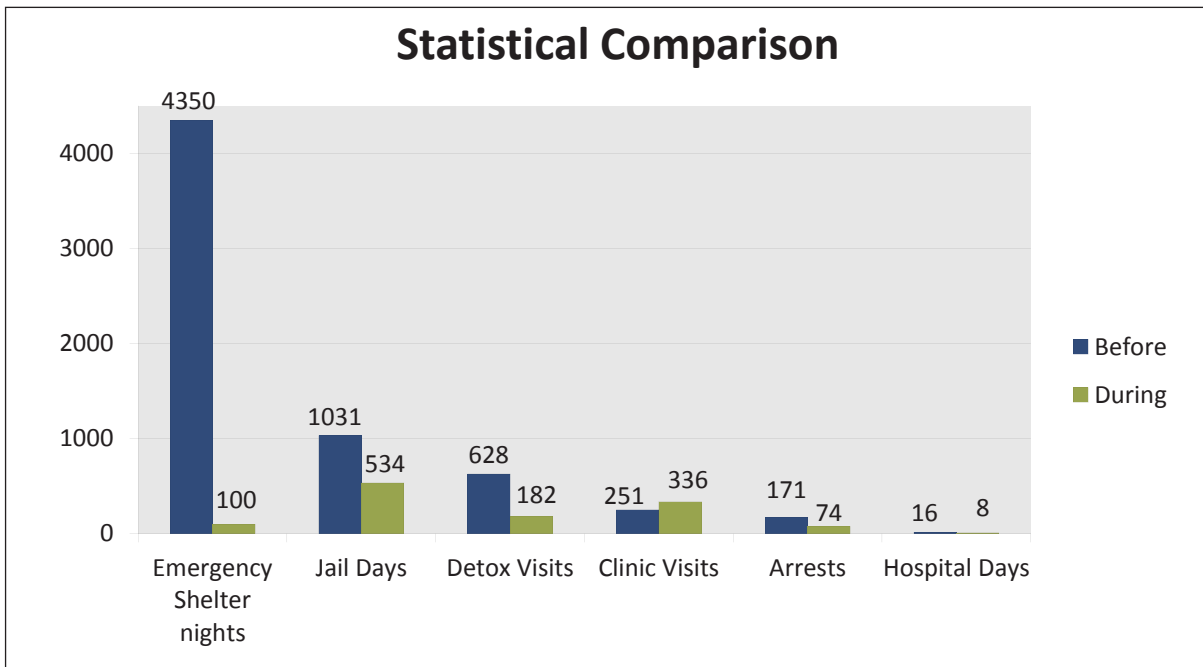
**Administration Costs:**

The capital outlay of the administration costs is \$97,248. This service is provided by Dacotah Foundation through a contract with Southeast Human Services. The front desk is staffed 24/7 and these individuals are considered key to the success and integration back into the community. They staff check tenants and guests in and out of the building, monitor the security system, help with wellness checks, and work to link tenants to appropriate services.

**Emergency Shelter:**

Based on the information provided by only one of several homeless shelters in Fargo, the Study Group costs were reduced from \$139,200 to \$3,200, for a total cost savings of \$136,000 or 98%. The number of emergency shelter nights was reduced from 4,350 to 100. The emergency shelter cost data was taken from averaging the costs for 2010 and 2011 to determine the average cost per year. The number of times accessed was taken compiled through October 2011.

Below is a statistical comparison of the number of times a service was accessed for the Cost Study Group before and during their residency at the Cooper House:



#### Places of Birth:

Many of the participants in the cost study call North Dakota their home and have lived here their entire life. Below, the red stars indicate where a portion of the Cost Study Group individuals are originally from.



*Please note that not all costs were captured during the study. Some services accessed are not accounted for here and the cost of working with these individuals on the street is understated. For example, only one of several homeless shelters and one of the two hospitals were contacted for this study. Meals from community based organizations are also not accounted for here. In addition, costs accumulated here are only based on the individuals costs accumulated while living in Fargo and do not account for costs incurred in other locations.*

