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City of Great Falls City Commission

The City is requesting comments on the allocation of the HOME-ARP (America Rescue Plan) funds appropriated to provide housing, services and shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable populations.

Neighborhood Council #7 includes the majority of the vulnerable populations because almost all of the services organizations, including Great Falls Rescue Mission, Cameron House, Toby's House, etc., are located within the Neighborhood Council #7 boundaries. In addition, there is a continuing discussion due to the homeless/vulnerable population which is gathering daily in the downtown area, specifically on 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North. Therefore, Neighborhood Council 7 has an extremely vested interest in the use of the HOME-ARP funds.

It is very apparent that Great Falls needs additional shelters. Studies in communities across America have shown that housing is essential, before other supportive services can be of use. The NeighborWorks Great Falls Baake project is for sustainable housing, with supportive services provided. However, the 24 units being renovated at the Baake building are too few and too far in the future. Great Falls needs additional temporary beds as quickly as possible.

The HOME-ARP Plan, as presented, does not include any funds for emergency shelters. As the current shelters, Great Falls Rescue Mission, YWCA, etc., are filled to capacity, this is unacceptable. We need a local non-profit to step up and present a plan for an emergency shelter. We believe the churches involved in the encampment on the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North, First Methodist, First English Lutheran, First Baptist, and Episcopal Incarnation, would be willing to work together to create and administer an emergency shelter if funds were available.

Until emergency shelter options are available, there will continue to be encampments in the downtown neighborhoods. Please reconsider the use of the HOME-ARP funds to include emergency shelter options.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Neighborhood Council #7