

Editor:

What a blessing it was in 2016 when St. Louis received a \$1 million federal Housing First grant that allowed many homeless people get to permanent housing. <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/human-services/homeless-services/news/city-secures-1-million-federal-grant-to-rapidly-re-house-people-experiencing-homelessness.cfm> For some people, that was all they needed, while others lost their housing and had to be given housing elsewhere. Nonetheless, many people who were homeless in 2016 now have stable lives and are contributing members of the community.

But not all people who applied in 2016 received housing. And in the last two years, many more people have become homeless. This is why there is still a continuing need for emergency shelter and emergency services. Biddle House was renovated by the City at a reported cost of \$2.4 million, and Peter & Paul and St Patrick Center were paid \$515,000 annually to make things run.

This year for various reasons, both Peter & Paul and St Patrick Center will not be operating the Biddle House Opportunities Center, so a politically connected Ohio company, Homefull, will be paid \$980,000 to make things run. <https://www.riverfronttimes.com/newsblog/2018/07/18/ohio-nonprofit-to-take-over-biddle-house-homeless-shelter> The increased payment is 90% over what the two local non-profits were paid, which might be understandable if more people were being served and housed. But not only is Homefull being paid \$465,000 more than the local charities, but it is no longer providing services to nonresidents of BHOC. Thus, children, women, and unsheltered men are at the mercy of the generosity of other nonprofits. Perhaps some of the nonprofits are being paid to provide meals, showers, laundry, shelter, referrals to permanent housing. Or maybe not. No one is providing transportation to the dispersed providers.

First, we call on St Louis City to be accountable with its money, to tell us where these additional dollars are being spent. And we call on St Louis City to provide continuing emergency services for those who cannot help themselves.

In the past ten years, fewer than 100 affordable units have been added to the St Louis housing market, at the same time tens of millions of dollars have been awarded in LIHTC and TIF monies for the benefit of the more affluent. In the past three years, Homefull was paid \$300,000 each year for consultant work, money we believe St. Louis should have instead spent on creating more affordable housing units.

Second, we call on the City of St. Louis to increase the number of affordable units-- SROs, apartments, and houses. Thus, more people will have permanent homes and fewer people will become homeless. Prevention is the best solution to homelessness.

Metropolitan St. Louis Coalition for the Homeless

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