NEWS RELEASE

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City Council to hear MTSU study on housing and services partnership
Study Addresses Solutions to Serving At-Risk Community with Social Services Needs

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. — The Murfreesboro City Council will gather in a workshop session Thursday, July 13, at 4 p.m., in Council Chambers at City Hall, 111 West Vine St., to review a needs assessment study conducted by MTSU on coordinating a joint partnership response to homelessness and housing needs in Murfreesboro.

MTSU professor, Dr. Michael Sherr, chair of MTSU's Department of Social Work, and Jackie Jones, Social Work master's graduate, will present their study results to City Council. The study specifically recommends that local agencies coordinate the delivery of resources and services into a centralized campus designed to more effectively and conveniently assist individuals with transitioning to and sustaining affordable, permanent housing.

"Finding available, affordable housing is getting more difficult," said Sherr. "The city is getting bigger and there are enough people, enough stakeholders from different parts of our community that need and want to work together to address housing concerns now."

The City of Murfreesboro continues to experience growth with the population expected to grow to 228,000 by 2035. The vision of the *Murfreesboro 2035* comprehensive plan calls for providing a mix of housing options, including a comprehensive solution to meeting the needs of our most vulnerable citizens.

Sherr and his students worked with the City of Murfreesboro to study the concept of a centralized campus where social service agencies could establish satellite offices, creating a "one-stop" environment for many types of assistance. One graduate student and two social work undergraduate students worked with Sherr since January on the project funded by a $15,000 grant from the city. The students also interned with The Journey Home, 308 Castle St., a community outreach center for the homeless and at-risk residents of Rutherford County.

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The homeless population has soared across U.S. cities, including Murfreesboro, since the financial crisis and Great Recession of 2008. The City of Murfreesboro, partnering social service agencies, and non-profit organizations are considering a number of approaches to reducing homelessness. Members of the public interested in learning more about this study and efforts to helping at-risk families in our community are encouraged to participate.

"Reducing homelessness is a community-wide issue that simply cannot be ignored," said City Community Development Director John Callow. "We are sincerely grateful to MTSU for studying ways the city can leverage strengths as a community toward ensuring that housing services are provided in the most effective and efficient manner."

The MTSU study "Conceptual Master Plan" outlines 1) community needs 2) current costs and future benefits 3) programs and capacities and 4) agencies and partners to provide housing.

Established in 1999, the Murfreesboro/Rutherford County Homeless Task Force, now known as the Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County, worked with the MTSU social work contingent. The Alliance has been working on a longer-term solution to create a centralized social services campus for a one-stop approach to providing community resources, particularly to the most vulnerable and homeless.

The campus-style approach has proven effective in other cities including San Antonio, Texas and Columbia, South Carolina. Following the MTSU study's recommendation and Council approval, the Alliance will work to organize additional key service providers into a planning committee that will establish a core list of participants in the future campus.

For City News online, visit www.Murfreesborotn.gov.

Photo attached:

1. *Conceptual Master Plan photo.jpg.*

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