

## Our view: No place like home

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The state is spending a lot of money — more than \$91 million this year — to house families in need of emergency shelter. Yet, as our recent four-part series, "Far From Home," made clear, it's not an ideal situation from anyone's point of view.

The Motel 6 on Route 1 in Danvers is hardly the Four Seasons, after all. And the fact is no hotel room can provide the psychic and physical comforts that come from having a home or apartment of one's own.

Yet for those families struggling to cope in the worst recession since before World War II, a room in a highway motel may be the only alternative to living on the street or in one's car.

The overriding lesson from the series is that while the decline in the real estate market over the last few years has made more homes affordable to more people, there remains a desperate shortage of adequate housing for those in the worst financial straits.

Stimulus funds such as those that will allow the long-delayed Powder House Village housing complex in Ipswich to go forward may provide part of the answer. Those funds have also provided fresh impetus to the "rapid re-housing" program operated by the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, which last week was interviewing families placed in Danvers motels in hopes of finding them a better place to live.

Meanwhile, the state must get involved in helping those communities — Danvers, Chelsea, West Springfield — with the largest population of motel families. Rep. Ted Speliotis, D-Danvers, said he has been talking with fellow lawmakers about drafting legislation that would have the state pick up a larger share of certain costs such as school transportation.

The cost of providing services has indeed been substantial. At one point this fall, the Danvers school population had swelled by 80 kids due to the influx of homeless families. And the presence of so many families in these confined and relatively isolated complexes inevitably brings an increase in police calls and requires regular visits by firefighters and health and building inspectors to make sure the premises are safe for children and their parents.

But while the town has definitely been stressed by the increase in its homeless population and would like to see the state do more to help it cope, there's no question Danvers is a community with a big heart.

Residents have been extremely generous with their time and money, making sure these families are not forgotten during the holidays and never go hungry. Unlike some who would prefer to chase the homeless to another jurisdiction, the town has taken its obligation to this population extremely seriously, for which it should be applauded.

"All I know is that these are Danvers residents," Town Manager Wayne Marquis told reporter Matthew K. Roy, "and we're going to do our best to serve them and treat them with respect and provide them the services

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that we can while they are here."

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