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Reporter-Herald Editorial

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Time for shelter solution

In the past year, the number of residents using the inclement weather homeless shelter in Loveland has more than doubled.

That shelter, which opens only when temperatures dip below 20 degrees, is seeing much greater use in its downtown location.

Considering the strain the recession has put on residents, we wouldn't be surprised if it serves only a small fraction of the homeless in this community.

Nonprofits, the city and Loveland residents have worked wonders in their efforts to ensure homeless folks have a place to stay on cold nights, have access to necessities and get help with finding permanent housing and other services.

The volunteers who enable the city's shelter to operate, as well as House of Neighborly Service, Interfaith Hospitality Network and others, are among the leaders in taking care of our homeless brethren and all should be lauded for their efforts. And all have seen an increased need for the services they provide.

It may be time to consider whether Loveland should have a permanent homeless shelter, much like Boulder, Greeley and Fort Collins do. Certainly the presence of shelters in those communities has not been a magnet to attract the homeless away from Loveland and Longmont; many still have families or jobs in town they cannot leave.

The homeless shelters in those three cities all work on different models, each of which is worth looking into to serve the needs of Loveland's homeless population.

But now might be the time to start exploring a permanent shelter. The challenge of helping our homeless residents is one that's not going away.

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