

# A Place for Everyone



**Our plan to end homelessness in  
Lawrence and Douglas County**



**The City of Lawrence and Douglas County are grateful to be joined in this work by the following agencies that reflect the Housing and Homelessness Stakeholders in this community:**

Artists Helping the Homeless  
Bert Nash  
DCCCA  
Family Promise  
Habitat for Humanity  
Heartland Community Mental Health  
Justice Matters  
Kansas Balance of State Continuum of Care

Kansas Legal Services  
Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition  
Lawrence Community Shelter  
Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority  
Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health  
LMH Health  
Tenants to Homeowners  
Willow Domestic Violence Center

# ***A Place for Everyone* is our community plan to end chronic homelessness in Douglas County.**

Our goal: By 2028, we will create a system that achieves functional zero through policy, system, and environmental changes resulting in all Douglas County residents having access to the fundamental human right of safe, accessible, attainable, and affordable housing, and in which homelessness is a rare and brief occurrence.

To reach this goal, we've established five work areas to be addressed:

- Equity and Inclusion
- Affordable Housing
- Supportive Housing
- Systems
- Emergency Shelter and Services



Currently, our community does not have sufficient capacity for people to access the type of shelter they need for their specific circumstance. According to the 2022 Douglas County Homelessness Needs Assessment conducted by the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research, more affordable housing and permanent affordable housing options are needed to serve the unsheltered population in Douglas County.

From this research and based on community conversations we've had with people in Douglas County, including those with lived experience, we've identified an overwhelming need to increase availability in these three categories of shelter: 1) affordable housing, 2) emergency shelter and services, and 3) supportive housing. All our work ladders up to these three goals:

**1. Increased affordable housing**

**2. Increased emergency shelter and services**

**3. Increased supportive housing**

As we work toward our goals for increased affordable housing, emergency shelter and services, and supportive housing, we need to be intentional in the way we do the work. There are two primary considerations to how we do our work: the first is Equity and Inclusion and the second is the Systems we have in place to connect our partner organizations behind one collective goal: ending chronic homelessness in Douglas County.

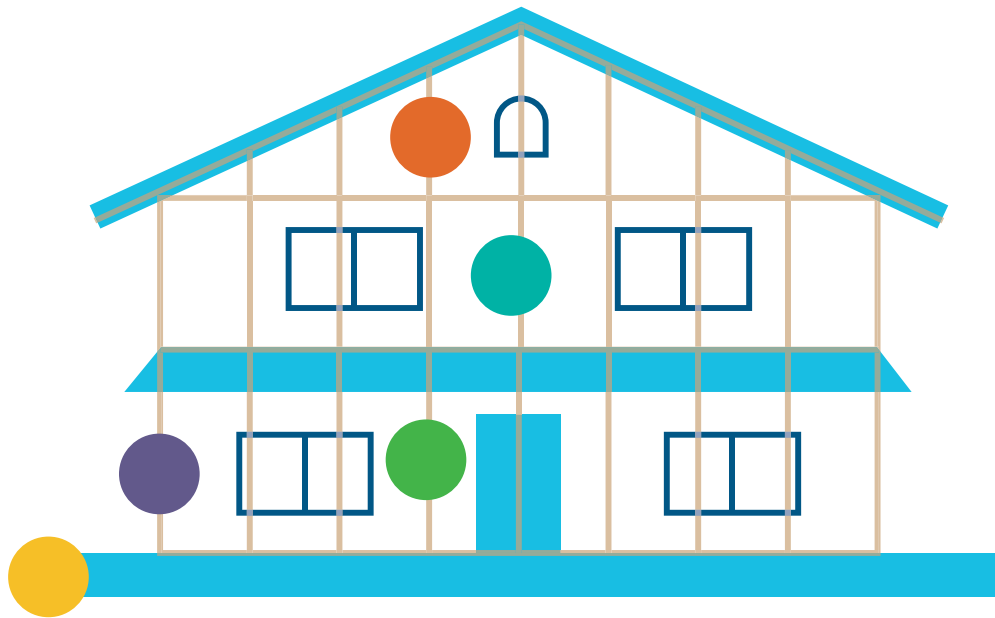


The Housing Needs Continuum shows the wide range of sheltering options that should be available in a community. Each part of the housing continuum serves a unique need to the individuals that utilize them.



*Affordable housing is defined as when total housing costs exceed no more than 30% of a household's total income.*

**Our approach to ending chronic homelessness is like building a house. The five work areas are all important parts of the house we're building.**



#### FOUNDATION

First, our house needs a solid foundation. The foundation of our work to end chronic homelessness is equity and inclusion as it will inform every other aspect of our plan.

#### INFRASTRUCTURE

After the foundation is established, we're building the infrastructure of our house: the walls, the plumbing, etc. For our plan to end chronic homelessness, the infrastructure is the Systems work area. Our Systems will govern over and hold the rest of our work together.

#### LEVELS

Finally, we have the different levels of the house itself. The first floor of our house is the most important and most used, and for our plan to end chronic homelessness, that is our work to increase affordable housing. The second floor of our house, which is also important but generally less utilized, is supportive housing. Finally, we have the top floor of the house, which for our plan is Emergency Shelter and Services. This is a necessary part of the house, but we don't use it nearly as often as the main living areas.





## Our Foundation: Equity and Inclusion

According to the 2022 Douglas County Homelessness Needs Assessment, both racial and gender disparities in who experiences homelessness warrant further attention in our community. Additionally, the study identified a need to explore opportunities for engaging individuals with lived experience of homelessness to provide decision-making input.

Recognizing that homelessness disproportionately impacts women, Black, Indigenous, and other Persons of Color (BIPOC) in our community, this plan is designed to optimize equity by focusing on the following low-income populations in our community:

- Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness
- BIPOC individuals/households experiencing or at-risk of homelessness
- LGBTQ+ individuals/households experiencing or at-risk of homelessness
- Families with children younger than 18
- Single-parent, female-headed households
- Justice-involved/formerly incarcerated residents
- Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) in institutional setting
- Low-income seniors
- Transitional youth, unaccompanied minors, and youth aging out of foster care
- Individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) and severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI)
- Survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and/or stalking
- Immigrant individuals/households
- Individuals with English as second language
- Individuals with disabilities





### WHAT ARE OUR GOALS FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION?

- By 2024, define a clear set of equity goals that will inform all areas of this plan
- By 2024, prioritize equity in community education resources
- By 2024, establish ongoing roles in this work for people with lived experience
- By 2025, use data to track success and sustainability
- By 2026, focus on equity in policy and budget decisions
- By 2026, target systemic inequities to increase diverse homeownership
- By 2027, promote best practices that improve diversity and equity for all service providers

### HOW ARE WE GOING TO REACH OUR EQUITY AND INCLUSION GOALS?

- Support a shared vision of equity between all local agencies and government with a shared terminology list
- Determine four data performance measures that tie directly to equity goals and action steps
- Highlight equity in all community education resources and communication, with improved collaboration and availability of easy-read resources
- Establish ongoing roles for individuals with lived experience to inform planned strategies, including an advisory board and opportunities for paid work
- Develop a decision-making model that targets and reduces racial disparities by prioritizing funding for projects with an equity focus
- Identify policies that reduce the risk of homelessness, increase accessibility and uplift historically marginalized populations; target systemic inequities and increase diverse homeownership
- Create long-term Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training and assessments for all levels of organization and government



## The Infrastructure: Systems

Ending chronic homelessness in Douglas County requires a coordinated system of resources in which many organizations work together. These “systems” help us gather an accurate picture of where things stand so that we can move this work forward.

The systems we are establishing in our community fit into the Built for Zero framework, which is an initiative both the City of Lawrence and Douglas County committed to in March 2020. In the Built for Zero model, we end chronic homelessness through the following strategy:

1. Build a single team that is accountable for ending homelessness throughout the community.
2. Commit to a shared aim of ending homelessness. We measure progress not by the goals of each organization but by whether we are collectively driving down the number of people experiencing homelessness.
3. Know everyone experiencing homelessness by name and in real-time.
4. Make data-driven, targeted investments for increased housing.

Our systems goals are all work items to be accomplished in the next one-to-two years, as our success in these areas will help inform and improve our work in the housing investment areas of this plan.



### WHAT ARE OUR GOALS FOR SYSTEMS?

- By July 2024, achieve quality data through the Built for Zero framework
- By April 2024, launch a dashboard for real-time homelessness and housing data specific to Douglas County
- Increase participation in the Homeless Management Information System and Coordinated Entry System by 20%

### HOW ARE WE GOING TO REACH OUR SYSTEMS GOALS?

- Collaborate among partners within the Homeless Management Information System and promote resource and service tracking
- Build a Built for Zero-specific report and dashboard and share it with the community
- Identify agencies who serve the unhoused population that are not able to use the Homeless Management Information System and create a plan for data integration for the dashboard
- Develop key performance indicators to utilize for public education
- Conduct a Housing Study through the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation
- Increase Lawrence and Douglas County representation at Continuum of Care Homeless Management Information System Steering Committee meetings
- Make the Homeless Management Information System accessible for all homeless targeted programs and housing services throughout the community to review, input data and pull reports



## The first floor: Affordable housing

Affordable housing is the solution to homelessness. It fosters economic prosperity and is a basic human right. And yet, Douglas County does not have enough housing that is affordable for people who live and work in our community. Housing costs continue to rise for both renters and homeowners, resulting in an increase in evictions and homelessness—and a decrease in homeownership. Meanwhile, wages have not kept pace with the rising cost of rent, utilities, interest rates and home sales prices, which has increased the number of households experiencing housing stress and insecurity. Housing stress is defined as spending more than 30% of income on housing costs.

A 'housing wage' is what a household must earn to afford rent at fair market value without spending more than 30% of income in housing expenses. The housing wage in Douglas County for a two-bedroom apartment is \$18.27 an hour—more than double the state minimum wage. This means that even working full time, many community members cannot afford the cost of housing. Almost half of renters and almost a quarter of homeowners in Douglas County experience housing insecurity, meaning that many of these households are one emergency away from homelessness.

The goals of the affordable housing portion of this plan are focused on increasing the amount of affordable rental and homeownership properties and improving access to the affordable housing that already exists.



### WHAT ARE OUR GOALS FOR INCREASING AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

- By 2028, increase the supply of affordable rental housing units by 1,500
- By 2028, increase the supply of affordable homeownership units by 200
- By 2028, increase the supply of accessible and affordable units by 100
- By 2028, increase the supply of affordable units for families with minor children by 500
- By 2028, establish policy and system changes that realign power imbalances that currently prevent access to, or development of, affordable housing

### HOW ARE WE GOING TO REACH OUR AFFORDABLE HOUSING GOALS?

- Develop a long-term affordable housing plan
- Provide a grant subsidy for new development or rehabilitation of desired unit types
- Acquire parcels and units for the community land trust and future affordable housing development
- Provide recommendations for City code updates that allow for affordable housing development
- Establish the tenant's right to legal representation in Douglas County
- Enforce the City's protection against source of income discrimination
- Establish a City of Lawrence vacant and dilapidated structure registry
- Establish an incentive program for affordable housing development
- Establish funding resources
- Develop a plan for ongoing community engagement re: affordable housing
- Develop programs that increase racial equity in affordable housing access and land ownership



## The Second Floor: Supportive Housing

An increase in supportive housing, especially permanent supportive housing, is needed to serve community members who have the most difficulty remaining housed. Data from the 2022 Douglas County Homelessness Needs Assessment points to a sizable portion of the population experiencing long-term and often cyclical bouts of homelessness. More than 40% of this population had experienced homelessness three or more times in the past three years, and almost 50% had been homeless for more than 12 months in the past three years. Data also indicated a high incidence rate of mental health and substance use issues within the population.

The rates of chronic/cyclical homelessness, mental health, and substance use issues, as well as conversations with community providers, indicate that more than 150 individuals may benefit from supportive housing to help them break the chronic homelessness cycle. The Corporation for Supportive Housing's needs assessment (released May 2022) focused on community permanent supportive housing needs within Douglas County. It found that 381 supportive housing units are needed in the community. Of those, individuals and families experiencing homelessness need at least 115 permanent supportive housing units.



### WHAT ARE OUR GOALS FOR INCREASING SUPPORTIVE HOUSING?

- By 2027, increase the number of permanent supportive housing units dedicated to these groups:
  - Chronically homeless individuals (+30 units)
  - Chronically homeless families (+2 units)
  - Homeless individuals aged 55+ (+50 units)
  - Justice-involved individuals (+20 units)
  - Child-welfare involved families (+10 units)
  - Homeless individuals aged 17-23 (+8 units)
- By 2027, increase the number of transitional housing units dedicated to homeless individuals with substance use disorders or mental illness by 15 units

### HOW ARE WE GOING TO REACH OUR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING GOALS?

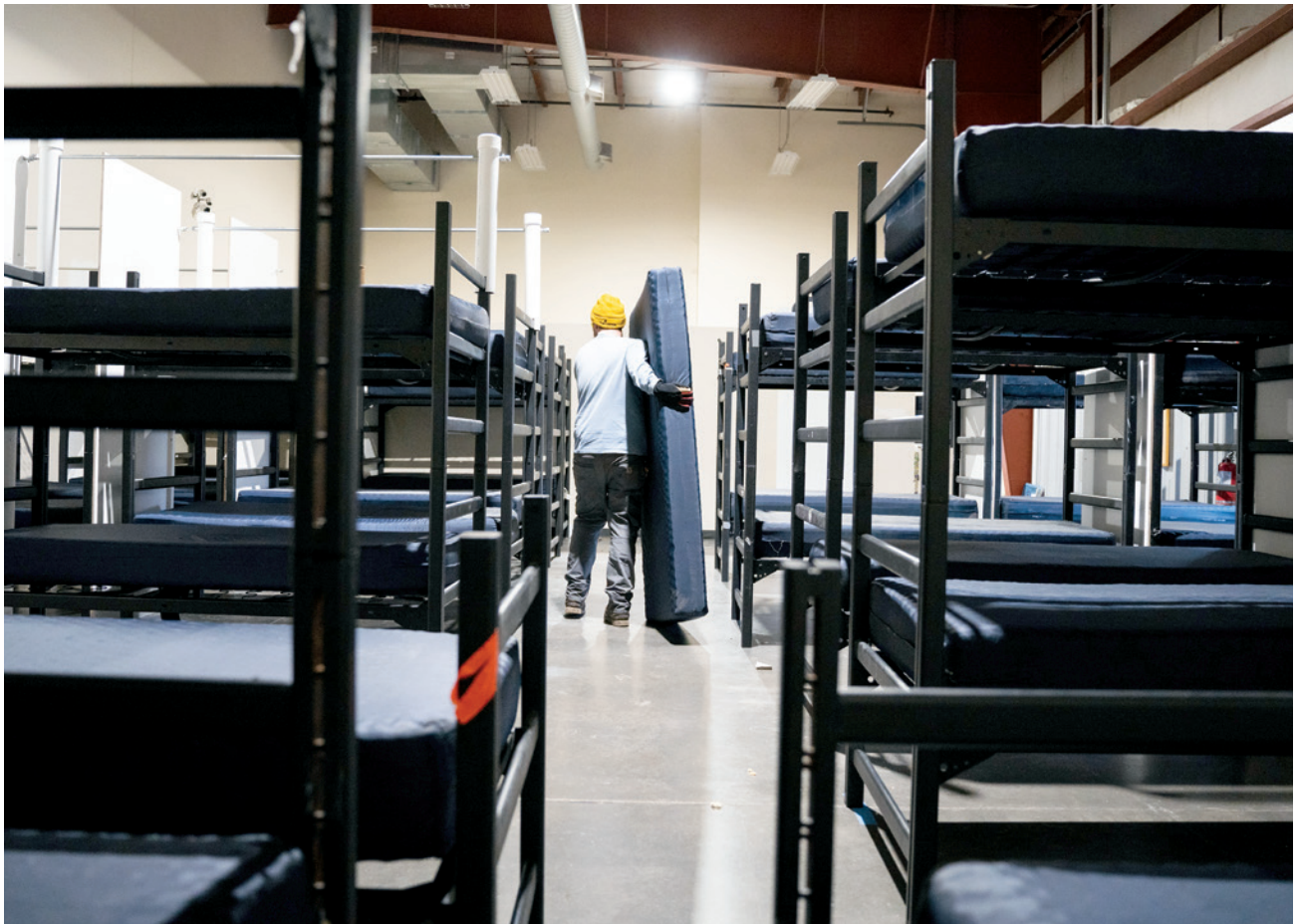
- Develop a five-year supportive housing Capital Improvement Plan
- Establish a community supportive housing case management program
- Establish sustainable funding resources
- Design and develop emergency, non-congregate shelter services
- Design a curriculum to build community buy-in and trust for supportive housing



## The Top Floor: Emergency Shelter and Services

Emergency shelter is temporary, short-term housing for people experiencing homelessness. It is an intermediary solution that helps move individuals off the street or out of illegal camping into a situation where they can have access to needed support services. Emergency shelter can also be extremely beneficial for service providers as it gives them a known location where they can help people experiencing homelessness get the assistance they need.

In Douglas County, there are currently an insufficient number of emergency shelter beds for people experiencing homelessness. The latest point-in-time count in 2023 listed 351 homeless individuals living in Douglas County. Of those, 95 people are currently unsheltered.





### **WHAT ARE OUR GOALS FOR INCREASING EMERGENCY SHELTER AND SERVICES?**

- By 2024, enhance the regional coordinated entry system of agencies and access points to provide triage, diversion and care coordination to those at risk of—or currently experiencing—homelessness
- By 2026, establish a street outreach team to serve unsheltered homeless individuals
- By 2027, reduce the Douglas County Point-In-Time count for unsheltered individuals by 50%
- By 2027, provide women and families with immediate access to low-barrier emergency shelter services for up to 65 beds
- By 2027, establish a homeless community outreach and day center facility

### **HOW ARE WE GOING TO REACH OUR EMERGENCY SHELTER AND SERVICES GOALS?**

- Define programmatic and operational expectations for community organizations to provide emergency shelter services
- Develop policy framework to build trust and accountability with our community
- Define and develop the Pallet Shelter Village program
- Expand street outreach services
- Establish a community severe weather and disaster response and recovery emergency shelter plan for houseless individuals

# Conclusion

More detailed information on *A Place for Everyone* is available online at [dgcoks.org/aplaceforeveryone](http://dgcoks.org/aplaceforeveryone). The website includes corresponding action items for the identified strategies.

*A Place for Everyone* is a living plan that will be reviewed and updated annually. The website will have the most up-to-date information on the current work being undertaken.

## **Photo Credit**

Our thanks to Taylor Mah, City of Lawrence media and creative specialist, for the photos used in this document. Additionally, we thank and appreciate the following organizations for allowing us to take photos for use in this document:

Douglas County Housing Authority

Page 12: the Cottages at Green Lake project, which provides supportive housing for those with mental illness.

City of Lawrence

Page 4: Camp New Beginnings, an emergency shelter option in North Lawrence

Page 7: City crews building pallet cabins at The Village, an emergency shelter option on N Michigan St.

Artists Helping the Homeless

Pages 7, 14: Meraki House, which is a supportive housing option in our community.

Lawrence Community Shelter

Page 16: emergency overnight shelter facilities.

Tenants to Homeowners

Page 19: a completed house on Beatnik Ct.





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