

Let's **End** Homelessness

Strategic Plan / 2021

**OAK PARK
HOMELESSNESS
COALITION**

A low-angle photograph of a brick building with a fire escape against a blue sky with white clouds. The building is made of reddish-brown bricks and has several windows with white frames. A fire escape with black metal railings is attached to the side of the building. The sky is a vibrant blue with scattered white clouds. The text 'OUR AIM' is written in a white box on the left side of the image.

OUR AIM

To Make Homelessness
Rare, Brief and **One Time.**

We can end homelessness in Oak Park. And we can create a safety net for those who are at risk of experiencing homelessness—before it happens.

Homelessness can happen to any of us. A family emergency. A health emergency. Addiction. Mental health. Job loss.

It can happen to our neighbor whose car breaks down and can't afford the repairs, losing transportation and employment. It's the student in our schools sleeping on a couch with no sense of permanence. And it's someone struggling with issues that needs stable housing and the wraparound services to move forward.

The Oak Park Homelessness Coalition works together to build community, break down stereotypes, drive policy change and implement on-the-ground strategies and programs that help people get off the street and back to productive lives. This new strategic plan creates a path to help those individuals experiencing homelessness—and will help those at risk of becoming homeless.

The Pandemic and Its Impact on Ending Homelessness

Lynda Schueler remembers the day vividly.

Governor Pritzker had announced the State of Illinois would be on lock down due to the rapid spread of COVID-19. It was Friday, March 13, 2020.

“My heart jumped,” says Schueler, executive director of Housing Forward. “We knew that the overnight shelter model we had employed for our 27 year history was going to go away—literally overnight”

Schueler and her team (with support from the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition) worked quickly to move from the multiple shelter model to one location. Oak Park Temple stepped up, and shelter operations were consolidated to slow the spread of the virus.

Unfortunately, six days later, a staff person tested positive for the virus. And just like that, the shelter needed to close to protect the safety of clients, staff and volunteers.

Over a weekend, Housing Forward and the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition huddled and hashed out a plan that would move clients to hotels in Oak Park, Franklin Park and Hillside. “Because of the pandemic, the hotel business dried up, practically overnight, and that presented an opportunity for us. We were on the phone that entire Sunday afternoon, making calls and charging the agency credit card to secure rooms and cab our clients to hotels.”

The pandemic that turned society—and so many lives—upside down presented an opportunity.

“For 27 years, people came to the shelter in the evening and departed in the morning. Then that cycle would repeat—each day,” Schueler says.

With clients in hotel rooms, a semblance of stability was achieved. “Our clients got to sleep in a bed, and the same bed, for the first time in a long time,” says Schueler. “We got to know our clients as individuals and what they really wanted and needed to help them with their lives.”

Shortly after, Housing Forward connected with the owners of Write Inn, a 65-room hotel in Oak Park. “The hotel was shut down, and owners weren’t sure what would happen next or when the pandemic would end,” Schueler recalls.

Working with the owner, Housing Forward leased the now-former hotel, converting it to a new interim housing model. Clients go through an intake process that provides housing for 30 to 90 days with the goal of securing permanent housing—with wraparound services tailored to each client.

The shift from a temporary overnight shelter to a relationship-driven process based on trust and a long-term solution is profound.

“We learned from Rockford that you needed to know and work with each person as an individual,” says Lisa DeVivo, Executive Director of the Community Mental Health Board of Oak Park Township. “The pandemic, as awful as it was, provided that opportunity to connect with people through hotels and via the street outreach program.”

In addition to the interim housing program, the former Write Inn includes a medical recovery program. Other new affordable housing solutions have been deployed:

- Sojourner House In partnership with Oak Park Housing Authority, Housing Forward (with support and advocacy from the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition) established Sojourner House, a six-unit home that provides medical respite for those leaving the hospital.
- Ohana House is a three-unit house that provides a home for larger families with children.

During the pandemic, the Coalition formed a work group to address panhandling and homelessness in Downtown Park. Working with Housing Forward, Downtown Oak Park, the village of Oak Park and the Oak Park Police Department, a plan was created that called for communication and education with businesses and residents along with a mix of street outreach and a port-a-potty program to address public health and safety.

As the pandemic continued into the Winter of 2020, concern grew that because there was no longer an overnight shelter, those living on the street would have nowhere to go to escape an extreme weather event.

Thanks to the leadership of David Pope and the generosity of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, the Coalition worked with Housing Forward, the Village of Oak Park and the Oak Park Police Department to create a COVID-safe temporary shelter that served 18 people for two weeks. Eleven of those guests left the shelter with a permanent housing situation.

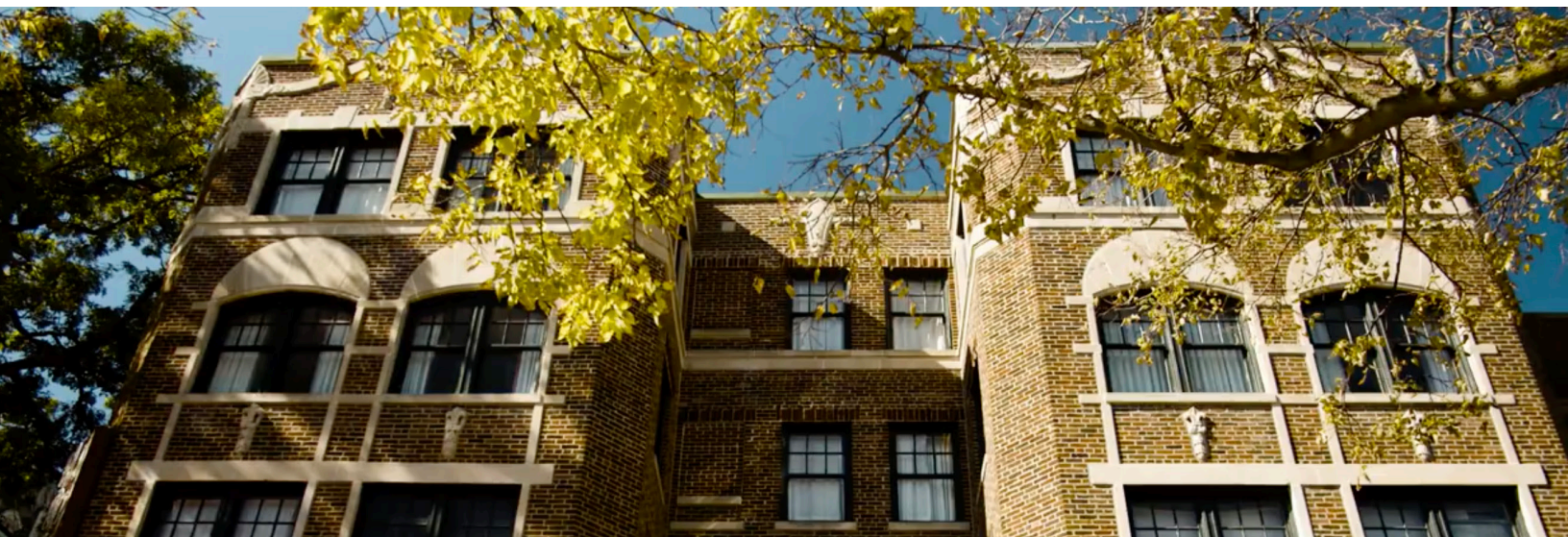
Because of the pandemic, the hotel business dried up, practically overnight, and that presented an opportunity for us. We were on the phone that entire Sunday afternoon, making calls and charging the agency credit card to secure rooms and cab our clients to hotels.

— LYNDA SCHUELER, HOUSING FORWARD

As 2020 ended, the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition sought input from Coalition members and the community to create a new strategic plan. This plan builds on the progress and success of the first plan—and will guide the Coalition and community as we work to end homelessness in Oak Park by making it rare, brief and one time.

The new plan aimed to create a way to understand the number of people experiencing homelessness in our community and the development of a dashboard to track progress.

This plan was finalized in 2021. It provides a data-driven approach married with education, compassion and a strategic focus on ending homelessness in Oak Park.





Working To End Homelessness In Oak Park

The Oak Park Homelessness Coalition is composed of 50-plus local businesses, government, healthcare, faith-based groups, school districts, nonprofits and social service agencies working together to make homelessness in Oak Park rare, brief and one time.

Represented by a 10-person Core Team that meets monthly, the OPHC meets quarterly and holds one event a year to educate the community, develop and implement the plan and take action to help those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Together, we are working to end and prevent homelessness in Oak Park by:

- generating a baseline understanding of the homelessness issue in Oak Park
- creating goals and strategies to combat homelessness
- implementing tactics to create a public-facing campaign that educates people about the issue and how people can help
- collaborating with a broad coalition to help those who are homeless or in danger of being homeless

CORE TEAM MEMBERS

Lisa DeVivo
Community Mental Health Board — Oak Park Township

Tammie Grossman
Village of Oak Park

John Harris
a5 Branding + Digital, Facilitator

Jim Madigan
Resident

Vanessa Matheny,
Community Mental Health Board — Oak Park Township

Jeff Prior
Village of Oak Park

Lynda Schueler
Housing Forward

David Seleb
Oak Park Public Library

Rob Simmons
Oak Park Public Library

Gail Shelton
New Moms

STEERING COMMITTEE

Betsy Benito
High Ground Partners

Elizabeth Chadri
Oak Park River Forest
Community Foundation

Lisa DeVivo
Community Mental
Health
Board — Oak Park
Township

Tammie Grossman
Village of Oak Park

Erin Harmon
Housing Forward

John Harris
a5 Branding & Digital

CJ Hawking
United Methodist Church

Mackie Hill
a5 Branding & Digital

**Dannette
Kennedy-Salaam**
Housing Forward

Jim Madigan
Citizen

Vanessa Matheny
Community Mental
Health Board — Oak
Park Township

David Pope
Oak Park Residence
Corporation / Oak Park
Housing Authority

Jeff Prior
Village of Oak Park

Lynda Schueler
Housing Forward

David Seleb
Oak Park Public Library

Gail Shelton
New Moms

Rob Simmons
Oak Park Public Library

Deborah Wess
Citizen

COALITION

8th Legislative District

39th District

a5 Branding & Digital

Adult Redeploy Illinois

African American Christian
Foundation

Beyond Hunger (Oak Park
River Forest Food Pantry)

Chicago Coalition for the
Homeless

Collaboration for Early
Childhood

Community Builders Inc.

Community of
Congregations

Community Mental
Health Board of Oak Park
Township

Distinctive Coaching

Downtown Oak Park

First United Church of
Oak Park

Hephzibah Children's
Association

Housing Forward

MaidPro Oak Park

Menta Academy Oak Park

NAMI Metro Suburban

New Moms

Oak Park Elementary
School District 97

Oak Park Housing
Authority

Oak Park Police
Department

Oak Park Public Library

Oak Park Regional Housing
Center

Oak Park Residence
Corporation

Oak Park Residents

Oak Park - River Forest
Chamber of Commerce

Oak Park - River Forest
Community Foundation

Oak Park Township

Oak Park - River Forest
School District 200

Park District of Oak Park

Pillars Community Health

Proviso Leyden Council for
Community Action, Inc.

Rotary Club of Oak Park -
River Forest

Rush Oak Park Hospital

Sarah's Inn

Thresholds

Thrive Counseling Center

The Time Exchange
Project

Triton College

Village of Oak Park

VOICE Oak Park

The Way Back Inn

West Cook YMCA

West Suburban Hospital

Pat Anderson

Barry Koren

Sandra Sokol

Deborah Wess

PLANNING AND PROGRESS:

Ending Homelessness in Oak Park

In 2015, the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition formed, bringing together 50 organizations the community along with individuals dedicated to ending homelessness in our community.

The 2016 strategic plan laid out a path to make homelessness rare brief and one time. A structure consisting of a core team (which meets monthly), a Coalition (which meets quarterly) and five work groups (meeting regularly) was developed to address the issues and needs.

The Coalition has made significant progress in the community via five work groups:

Affordable Housing

- Creation of a new Flexible Rental Assistance Fund (FRAP) with Village of Oak Park that helped 120 households with rent and other assistance
- Funding for a new interim housing program now known as the Sojourner House
- Championed approval of a new affordable housing development, now called The 801, on South Oak Park Avenue

Advocacy and Communication

- Development of a Coalition web site
- Active management and marketing through email and social media
- Planned annual meetings and quarterly Coalition meetings
- Developed video and other marketing communication assets
- Advocated for change and funding with local, state and federal government

Community Touchpoints

- Supported development of a street outreach team to work directly with people living on the streets
- Coordinated multi-stakeholder group to address panhandling in Downtown Oak Park
- Secured sponsorship for port-a-potties downtown during pandemic

Service Intersections

- Rollout of an online closed-loop referral database known as the Health Connection HUB
- Implementation of the Families in Transition (FIT) Program with school districts 97 and 200
- Implementation of data-sharing agreements with school districts 97 and 200

Career Pathways

- Organized a group to connect the dots between education, employers and potential employees
- Promoted job opportunities and connected people to employment

OAK PARK HOMELESSNESS COALITION

Strategic Plan

The value of the Coalition is to identify and promote strategies to prevent and end homelessness that are understood through the lens of racial equity. In doing this we will endorse solutions that benefit all residents in proportion to their needs and experiences of homelessness. As such, the Coalition will promote equitable strategies across all focus areas and embody equity within our guiding principles.

OUR AIM

To end homelessness in Oak Park by making it rare, brief and one time. We also seek to provide a safety net for those who might be in danger of becoming homeless in our community

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Expand Housing First Approach by increasing number of landlords and units providing quality housing.

- By Name Approach means working from a by-name-list and creating housing for specific populations through an individualized effort (not a one-size fits all approach).
- Ensure wraparound services keep people stably housed once re-housed, continue to strengthen connections between community stakeholders.
- Strengthen community safety net that ensures that people don't experience homelessness at the outset.
- Equity through discussing strategies and outcomes in a framework of understanding and addressing racial disparities, and including the voice of lived experience.

STRATEGY 1

Strengthen Affordable and Supportive Housing Pathways

Oak Park is a unique community with a small footprint and diverse housing stock that includes multifamily rental, small and large single-family homes, and a growing condominium base. The existing housing stock lends itself to creating affordable rental housing opportunities, and even more so to preserve the affordability of existing housing to maintain a diversity of residents across race, ethnicity, age, and household composition. While there are limited, available lots for new development in the Village, there are opportunities to incorporate supportive and affordable housing when new developments occur using an integrated, mixed-use housing model.

The Oak Park Homelessness Coalition will focus on supporting strategies that advance affordable housing creation through rental assistance for use in Oak Park and partnering on development activities in and around Oak Park. The Coalition will also advance tenant protections through education of renters and owners on how to prevent evictions and work collaboratively to use COVID Recovery funding for rental assistance in an equitable way to support those most impacted by the pandemic. The impact sought by the Coalition is a growing, local base of quality affordable and supportive housing for people in the community through both development and preservation.

OUTCOMES	GOALS	ACTION AREAS
Affordable and supportive housing resources will continue to grow in the Village of Oak Park and surrounding communities to meet the needs of its residents.	Expand rental housing options in Oak Park that are affordable to people with extremely low incomes either at-risk of or exiting homelessness.	Support tenant applications for rental assistance, housing subsidy programs, and other housing developments that add rental housing options for people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness, where applications demonstrate removal of tenant barriers that disproportionately impact people of color due to credit and corrections history.
		Continue to champion and create new development partnerships for affordable and supportive housing projects in Oak Park.
		Present information about development projects in Oak Park that create more supportive and affordable housing that would be appropriate for Affordable Housing Fund.
People experiencing homelessness and chronic homelessness in Oak Park will have direct pathways to locally sourced housing options.	Create a by-name list for housing.	Develop parameters for the By Name List and distinction from EntryPoint Coordinated Entry System.
		Develop housing referral and tracking process for By Name List with local housing resources committed to the Coalition.
Increase in affordable rental housing options while preserving housing quality.	Promote small (<\$10K) capital improvement fund for landlords to make upgrades to apartment units to incentive renting to housing choice voucher holders.	Survey property owners.
		Research existing funds for availability to support this program.
		Pilot with existing supportive housing providers facilitating housing placements in coordination with the CoC or the Oak Park Housing Authority.
	Connect to village’s housing programs and increase number of landlords and units providing quality housing.	Create shared landlord outreach portal between local housing services providers.
		Define the “indemnity fund” parameters based on best practices.
		Define “high housing barriers” and intervention parameters.
Create an indemnity fund that provides an incentive to landlords renting to households with high housing barriers.	Engage potential funding sources on holding funds in escrow for available draws if necessary.	

STRATEGY 2

Prevent Homelessness Through Coordination and Improved Safety Net

Keeping people in their own home, or safely in their current residence can take many different paths. To keep homelessness from happening the community needs a stronger safety net that goes beyond just adding financial resources. Education, engagement, and awareness of how to access support and regain housing stability can go a long way to change the trajectory of an eviction or housing loss. At the same time, when resources are available intentional efforts are needed to ensure equitable distribution and promote access, so they as targeted as possible to the most vulnerable residents.

The result of these efforts will be that current Oak Park residents have equitable access to available assistance and that fewer people will have to leave the community due to short-term housing instability. Local funds will be maintained that provide the most flexibility to meet resident needs. Tenants and landlords will be notified and proactive, and community residents will increase use of social supports on an early-intervention basis. The Coalition envisions a time when all families with children in Oak Park School Districts will access some form of homelessness prevention service assistance to stabilize their child’s educational needs.

OUTCOMES	GOALS	ACTION AREAS
The use of COVID-19 rental assistance will benefit residents equitably, where racial groups impacted by income loss and rental arrears will access and use available funding.	Ensure equitable access to COVID-recovery rental assistance to prevent eviction.	Replicate a support network like the vaccine access process that targets outreach and support to disproportionately impacted areas of Oak Park and neighboring communities.
		Work in collaboration with the Village of Oak Park to produce, disseminate materials to landlords and renters on how to access funding.
Renters and Owners Increase Their Understanding and Access to Available Assistance.	Advance an ordinance that requires information to be provided to tenants at lease-signing and upon 5-day notice on how to access homelessness prevention resources.	Engage with tenants to inform language, information, and experience with accessing prevention supports.
		Engage landlord associations on promoting prevention support for tenants behind on rent.
		Create information package for people exiting homelessness on how to request help in advance of eviction notice
Economically vulnerable Oak Park residents, with a focus on students and their families have a consistent, independent source of housing stability funding to keep them in the community.	Replenish the flexible rental subsidy program that helps families maintain rental housing in Oak Park.	Develop strategies to add funding from various sources to the FRAP including.
		Educate funders about the impact and outcomes of the FRAP 2018-2020 and on-going needs for support of financial assistance.
School districts will increase resource options and information for students enrolled in the homeless education program and more families will receive support in Oak Park.	Increase outreach and supports to homeless families with children in Oak Park Public schools.	Re-engage leadership and school social workers at D97 and D200 to determine common needs and goals on addressing the needs of homeless students and their families.
		Develop a collaborative relationship with the mental health care coordinators working with D97 and D200 to inform other actions on supporting homeless families in Oak Park.

STRATEGY 3

Strengthen Behavioral Health Services Coordination

People with mental health and substance use needs experience crises beyond traditional business hours and may not be in their own home or safe place to get help. As a community, the Coalition wants to make sure that residents in and around Oak Park understand where and how to access help, and to coordinate responses to offer help on an outreach basis.

Oak Park has adopted a collaborative approach to outreach to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness who may also have mental health or substance use needs. Local police have received special training and work in a unit with other non-profit providers to coordinate on engaging and referring people in need. This effort is meant to reduce a punitive approach to homelessness and continue to show a compassionate response addressing the underlying needs.

Oak Park partners, led by AMITA Presence Health, provide staffing of an overnight crisis line for people who are requesting homeless assistance when the shelters or other services providers are closed. Providers like Housing Forward then follow up with those requests to refer or serve the household. This model could expand beyond homeless services requests - and beyond the border of Oak Park- to other social services needs into a "211" model which is a non-emergency line for connection to employment, benefits, food, childcare, and other basic needs.

The Coalition seeks to continue to close gaps in the delivery and access to services for its neighbors and will initiate new housing and healthcare partnerships that increase behavioral health support and services access.

OUTCOMES	GOALS	ACTION AREAS
People experiencing homelessness have reduced negative encounters with public safety and more people who are unsheltered are documented as engaged in formal services.	Enhance the services and mental health response to Street Homelessness.	Support the expansion of coordinated street outreach supports.
		Train police on social services interventions.
Oak Park providers improve use of the Health Connection HUB evidenced through closed loop referral data and increase coordination with services outside of Oak Park that meet the needs of participants.	Expand relationships with services provided in nearby communities to increase closed-loop referrals through the Health Connection Hub.	Assess OPHC members that have program offices in other nearby communities.
		Use Health Connection HUB data to guide the focus of improved referral processes.
Residents of Oak Park and surrounding communities improve access to services.	Establish a 211 Service Line or expand the current 24-hour Crisis Call Line.	Engage AMITA Presences around opportunity to expand current crisis-response line.
		Determine call-types that need localized, regular access for non-emergency support.
		Pilot taking calls and referrals to at least 2 other social service needs beyond homelessness.
Coalition Health Care Partners join special funding and program initiatives to increase supportive housing and other interventions to end homelessness.	Create new homelessness/ healthcare interventions.	Engage local healthcare partners to expand housing, mental health, and healthcare services.
		Strengthen partnership connections with West Suburban Hospital and Rush Oak Park.
People experiencing homelessness in Oak Park will have improved access to substance use services	Strengthen substance use services referrals through the Health Connection HUB.	Engage local substance use providers through individual and group meetings to understand capacity and gaps in access.

STRATEGY 4

Increase Employment and Economic Stability

At the time people enter they are frequently unemployed and with little to no income. The reality is, based on data, is that people who are or have experienced homelessness maintain extremely low incomes. This is due to qualifying for disability income or finding work at minimum wage whether working part-time or full-time. The support needed to create attachment to the workforce and grow into sustainable wages for those who can work extends beyond the scope of housing. Unless households can access rental assistance, they will certainly spend over 50% of their income on rent, remaining cost burdened.

The Coalition’s Career Pathways initiative, that builds upon the Housing Forward Career Passports program, is a pilot initiative that focuses on helping the unemployed and underemployed connect with jobs that reflect their career goals beyond finding paid employment. The Coalition will continue to foster special support for people in the community to get employed and increase earnings. This focus will highlight existing employment efforts exploring ways to leverage local assets and businesses to employ people who have experienced homelessness.

OUTCOMES	GOALS	ACTION AREAS
People with lived experience have increased living wage employment options in and around Oak Park.	Incorporate Career Pathways into the Career Passport Program and expand coordination with Oak Park Public Libraries.	Use pilot data and report to secure seed funding for Career Pathways as a possible extension of Career Passport.
		Explore new business partnerships with restaurants.
There are increased paid career options for people with lived experience to deliver social and community services.	Explore peer-led programming and/or Peer Support Training.	Connect people experiencing homelessness with “Train the Trainer” or other paid positions for people with lived experience.
Ongoing employment programs use new models that increase wages for sustainable living in the community.	Establish a Transitional Wages program for people exiting homelessness building on results of Housing Forward/Cook County program.	Assess impact of Transitional Wages Program funding through Cook County.
		Support the replication or expansion of the Transitional Wages program.

“...I struggled with a lot of the same situations that the clients I serve deal with. Everyday I get up and serve and I think, wow, I wish I had this opportunity that the coalition is offering...and I tell each and every person that I come in contact with how amazing this program is.

—DANNETTE KENNEDY-SALAAM, HOUSING FORWARD



STRATEGY 5

Provide Data-Driven Advocacy to Reach Functional Zero in Oak Park

The Coalition is a voluntary organization that values its public and private membership. All members are natural advocates, and the work to address homelessness and housing is rooted inherently in advocacy. The Coalition will use data and the voices of people with lived experience to shape its priorities and on-going recommendations. The Coalition will rely on the newly created data-dashboard to educate the public and key stakeholders about the needs and the solutions to continue to reduce and end homelessness. The dashboard will identify areas of equal/unequal access for further advocacy, problem-solving, and capacity building.

With data and community voices as a guide, the Coalition and its members can help others understand the impact of policy and funding decisions and demonstrate unmet needs for housing and services. The outcome of this work will be to have clear communication, common understanding of priorities, and assist the Village of Oak Park and other communities in making the right investments.

OUTCOMES	GOALS	ACTION AREAS
<p>The Coalition and broader community will support data-driven responses to homelessness at the local level. The Coalition establishes a process used by all Work Groups to assess and explain how their work contributes to racial equity and adopts appropriate program changes as well as tracking any outcome data for discussion and promotion among the members.</p>	<p>Create a data dashboard to inform funding needs, equity response, and other priorities.</p>	<p>Publish and review data on a quarterly basis.</p>
		<p>Engage people with lived experience to respond to data and build greater understanding of the issues.</p>
		<p>Discuss and adjust responses to homelessness locally based on the data.</p>
		<p>Convene group to inform the racial equity lens for the data dashboard and Work Group priorities.</p>
		<p>Engage Work Groups in tracking and articulating the racial equity implications for actions.</p>
		<p>Document efforts to improve equitable access to resources and update policies to support these efforts in the housing, employment, healthcare, and outreach efforts.</p>
<p>Data will guide engagement and partnerships with nearby communities to increase support for solutions to homelessness.</p>	<p>Use data to plan regional outreach to inform housing and services.</p>	<p>Align with other local housing groups such as Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, Oak Park Regional Housing Center, and others.</p>
		<p>Engage leaders of nearby communities to discuss homeless trend data impacting their communities and potential solutions.</p>
<p>The Coalition will be seen as a reliable source for information and solutions to homelessness and guide local investments and updates to policies and programs.</p>	<p>Local and regional funding supports the needs outlined by the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition.</p>	<p>Use data to inform annual funding proposals to the Village of Oak Park and private foundations to direct locally available resources.</p>

STRATEGY 6

Develop a Sustainable and Equitable Organizational Infrastructure

The Coalition has evolved into a cooperative and action-oriented voluntary organization. The Coalition’s efforts and strategies are led by a Core Team, composed of approximately 12-15 people who meet monthly and represent various segments of the membership. The Core Team will increase in its racial diversity as well as its representation from people with lived experience of homelessness. The vision of the Core Team is to regularly review the data dashboard, track progress against the Strategic Plan, troubleshoot action areas with the Work Groups, and make consensus-driven decisions on issues of importance and bring them to the full Coalition membership.

The Work Groups carry out action steps indicated by the goals of the Strategic Plan and develop relationships across the community to foster

collaboration and coordination. Coalition members participate in Work Groups based on both the interest of the member as well as how the focus aligns with their organizational roles or personal expertise.

All meetings of the Coalition are open to the public and invite participation from all attendees. As a community group, the Coalition also wants to increase its capacity and efforts to be inclusive at all levels from leadership to the working groups. This will involve intentionally reaching out to leaders and community members of color and increase involvement of people with lived experience. Along with this, the community will become more aware and engaged in the issues in new ways and deepen relationships with each other based on racial equity.

OUTCOMES	GOALS	ACTION AREAS
<p>The Coalition becomes more reflective of the racial groups most impacted by homelessness. It also becomes more representative of people impacted by homelessness by incorporating recommendations and strategies shaped by the lived experience.</p>	<p>Increase participation of people with lived experience in the Core Team, Work Groups, and Coalition membership.</p>	<p>Outreach to local provider tenants, alumni, and staff to education about the Coalition and invite to meetings.</p>
		<p>Create pool of financial stipends and/or collaborate with Time Exchanges to recognize value of participation of people with lived experience.</p>
		<p>Conduct intentional outreach to community residents, organizational staff, and other leaders that contribute a culturally diverse perspective on ending homelessness.</p>
		<p>Make community outreach a quarterly activity and provide feedback to the Core Team on the efforts and outcomes.</p>
<p>Coalition members increase connections and develop a clear equity approach to homelessness in Oak Park. The Coalition and its members can identify and inform changes to programs or other strategies to ensure equitable outcomes across the populations served.</p>	<p>OPHC is conversant and educated about racial disparities caused by structural racism that impact homelessness and access to housing</p>	<p>Develop resource tools for common reading and discussion at Core Team and Coalition meetings, including guest speakers.</p>
		<p>Host discussions and report lessons learned at Full Membership Meetings.</p>
<p>Coalition Members and interested community stakeholders clearly understand the roles and functions of the organization and how to engage.</p>	<p>Roles and responsibilities are written and posted on the website</p>	<p>n/a</p>
	<p>A Core Team recruitment plan is outlined that includes representation founded in racial equity, both diversity, inclusion, and the voice of lived experience</p>	
<p>Coalition Members receive clear communication and have access to calendar updates, essential data, and Work Group progress notes</p>	<p>Core Team members support troubleshooting within Work Groups</p>	<p>n/a</p>

Next Steps

Ending homelessness in Oak Park takes a coalition—and a community. We need your help. How can you get involved?



These work groups meet monthly to develop a work plan (based on the strategic plan) and make progress toward the strategic plan goals. We also have a Street Outreach group that meets regularly. And, when the need arises, convene task forces and committees to address specific issues.

To get involved, please contact:
John Harris, a5 Branding & Digital
jharris@a5inc.com | 708.227.5313

Or reach out via the contact page on the web site: endhomelesnessoakpark.com

To be added to our email list, contact:
Isaiah Gransberry, a5 Branding & Digital
igransberry@a5inc.com | 219.670.3424

Please follow us on Social Media via Facebook | [OPHCoalition](#)

Glossary of Terms

To better understand the Strategic Plan, who it aims to help and how, consult the glossary of terms below.

Access to Recovery

Program funded through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, which provides service vouchers to clients who are mentally ill and/or chemically dependent to access a variety of treatment and supportive services including linkage to housing.

Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County

The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County is a non-profit organization responsible for planning and coordinating homeless services and housing options for all of Cook County outside of Chicago and Evanston. The Alliance organizes its work for homeless assistance at the local grassroots level. Three Community Based Service Areas (CBSAs) serving the north, west, and south areas of suburban Cook County—form a collaborative system, sharing information, referral, shelter, and service delivery within their local communities. The key to the success of the Continuum of Care process is the inclusion of all community members.

Case Management*

Process designed to move participants from where they are now to increased self-sufficiency. The process includes a variety of strategies, techniques, and resources designed to build on the participants' strengths and overcome their barriers. Case management attempts to impact three factors in the lives of participants motivation, skills and resources. Principles of case management include outreach and engagement, cultivating a trusting relationship, attending to basic survival needs, flexibility of services and client-centered. Phases of case management include assessment, planning/goal setting, arranging resources and follow-up.

Chronically Homeless

HUD defines a chronically homeless person as an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

Continuum of Care

Community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. It includes action steps to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness.

Continuum of Care Organizations

Consortium of homeless providers, governmental agencies, funders and other representatives which have joined to plan for and implement activities for the homeless.

Co-occurring Disorders

The presence of two or more disabling conditions such as mental illness, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, and others.

Discharge Planning

Significant percentage of homeless individuals report recent discharge from incarceration, hospitalization, residential health care, or treatment facilities. Successful discharge planning begins long before the end of someone's stay in such an institution and includes connection to housing and supportive services to assist the person in gaining/ maintaining stability. Integrated services both within and outside of institutions are necessary to assure effective discharge planning.

Emergency Shelter*

Any facility with overnight sleeping accommodations, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of homeless persons. The length of stay can range from one night up to as much as 4-6 months. Individuals who use emergency shelters consistently for basic food and shelter and have a disabling condition are defined as chronically homeless.

Family Homelessness

The primary cause of homelessness is a lack of housing that very low-income people can afford. In no jurisdiction in the United States does a minimum wage job provide enough income for a household to afford the rent for a modest apartment. More than a million children will experience homelessness this year. Indeed, one in ten poor children in our country will experience homelessness and the risk is higher the younger the child.

Harm Reduction

A set of practical strategies that reduce the negative consequences associated with drug use, including safer use, managed use, and non-punitive abstinence. These strategies meet drug users "where they're at," addressing conditions and motivations of drug use along with the use itself. Harm reduction acknowledges an individual's ability to take responsibility for their own behavior.

Homeless

(Definition per the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is — a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. The term “homeless” or “homeless individual” does not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to an Act of the Congress or a State law.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Community-wide database congressionally mandated for all programs funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) homeless assistance grants. The system collects demographic data on consumers as well as information on service needs and usage.

Housing Choice Voucher (AKA Section 8 voucher)

This type of affordable housing is based on the use of subsidies, the amount of which is geared to the tenant’s ability to pay. The subsidy makes up the difference between what the low-income household can afford, and the contract rent established by HUD for an adequate housing unit. Subsidies are either attached to specific units in a property (project-based), or are portable and move with the tenants that receive them (tenant-based). The Section 8 program was passed by Congress in 1974 as part of a major restructuring of the HUD low-income housing programs. Section 8 was created to permit federal housing assistance to go for construction or rehabilitation of new low-income housing or to subsidize existing housing.

Housing First

The goal of “housing first” is to immediately house people who are homeless. Housing comes first no matter what is going on in one’s life, and the housing is flexible and independent so that people get housed easily and stay housed. Housing first can be contrasted with a continuum of housing “readiness,” which typically subordinates access to permanent housing to other requirements. While not every community has what it needs to deliver housing first, such as an adequate housing stock, every community has what it takes to move toward this approach.

Interim Housing

Short-term housing program that rapidly re-houses persons who are homeless into appropriate permanent housing. While in interim housing, people receive housing assistance to help them locate housing in the least restrictive setting possible, case management to assess their situation and other service needs 24-hour basic services (showers, beds, meals, laundry, hygiene products), time limits of

120-days is the goal. The goal is for people to be in interim housing for the absolute minimum time necessary to access permanent housing. This makes interim housing different from transitional housing which typically seeks to prepare people for permanent housing through services and support provided over a 6 month to 2-year period. It is different from traditional emergency shelters, which provide only basic services and tend to be 12-hour only (night to morning) programs.

Mainstream Services

Refers to the government funded safety net including Workforce Investment Programs, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, State Administered General Assistance, Medicaid, Social Security, Veterans Services, and other large government programs. Many cite an erosion of mainstream services as a significant contributor to the dramatic increase in homelessness in recent years.

McKinney-Vento Act

The primary federal response targeted to assisting homeless individuals and families. The scope of the Act includes: outreach, emergency food and shelter, transitional and permanent housing, primary health care services, mental health, alcohol and drug abuse treatment, education, job training, and child care. There are nine titles under the McKinney-Vento Act that are administered by several different federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). McKinney-Vento Act Programs administered by HUD include: Emergency Shelter Grant Program, Supportive Housing Program, Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation for Single-Room Occupancy Dwellings, Supplemental Assistance to Facilities to Assist the Homeless, and Single Family Property Disposition Initiative. Also see: Emergency Shelter Grants, Federal Emergency Management Administration, Shelter Plus Care, Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation for Single-Room Occupancy Dwellings, and Supportive Housing Program.

Mental Illness

A serious and persistent mental or emotional impairment that significantly limits a person’s ability to live independently.

Permanent Housing

Housing which is intended to be the tenant’s home for as long as they choose. In the supportive housing model, services are available to the tenant, but accepting services cannot be required of tenants or in any way impact their tenancy. Tenants of permanent housing sign legal lease documents.

Permanent Supportive Housing*

A cost-effective solution to long-term homelessness in which residential stability is combined with appropriate supportive services to meet residents’ individual needs. Permanent supportive housing can come in a variety of forms. Some programs are “scattered site,” meaning a client or agency leases apartments in the community, and the program subsidizes the rent. Others develop a dwelling or

apartment building where supportive services are available on site. Some programs require that clients utilize services as a condition for remaining in the program while others provide, but do not require, participation in services. For many, the need for supportive services is reduced over time, as households gain stability. There is no definite length of stay.

Person with a Disability

HUD's Section 8 program defines a "person with a disability" as: a person who is determined to: 1) have a physical, mental, or emotional impairment that is expected to be of continued and indefinite duration, substantially impedes his or her ability to live independently, and is of such a nature that the ability could be improved by more suitable housing conditions; or 2) have a developmental disability, as defined in the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act.

Prevention*

Refers to any of a number of strategies used to keep individuals and families from becoming homeless. Activities or programs include but not limited to:

1. Short-term subsidies to defray rent and utility arrearages for households who have received eviction or utility termination notices
2. Security deposits or first month's rent to permit a homeless household to move into its own apartment
3. Mediation programs for landlord-tenant disputes
4. Legal services programs for the representation of indigent tenants in eviction proceedings
5. Payments to prevent foreclosure on a home
6. Other innovative programs and activities designed to prevent the incidence of homelessness

Re-entry Housing

Refers to transitional and supportive housing options for people coming out of prison and jail. Research has shown that homelessness is prevalent among people released from prison and jail, and that there is insufficient affordable housing available to people coming out of prison. Individuals released from prison who have a connection to stable housing may be less likely to be re-incarcerated than their counterparts.

SRO (Single-Room Occupancy) Housing

One of the country's oldest forms of affordable housing for single and elderly low-income people. Typically, an SRO room will have a sink and a closet. Bathroom, shower, kitchen and other rooms are usually shared.

Substance Abuse Issues

The problems resulting from a pattern of using substances such as alcohol and drugs. Problems can include: a failure to fulfill major responsibilities and/or using substances in spite of physical, legal, social, and interpersonal problems and risks.

Supportive Services (HUD definition)*

Services that assist homeless participants in the transition from the streets or shelters into permanent or permanent supportive housing, and that assist persons living successfully in housing. Generally refers to concrete services such as clothing, personal identification, transportation etc.

Ten Year Plans to End Long-Term Homelessness

These local and statewide campaigns in regions across the country seek to engage all sectors of society in a revitalized effort to confront and overcome homelessness in America. Each Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness provides solutions and options for looking communities committed to ending homelessness rather than just managing it.

Transitional Housing (HUD Definition)*

HUD defines transitional housing as a project that is designed to provide housing and appropriate support services to homeless persons to facilitate movement to independent living within 24 months. Functions as both a safety net and a stepping stone.

Veteran

Anyone who has been discharged from the military service whether they served on active duty in a conflict or not.

Voluntary Services

The term "supportive" in supportive housing refers to voluntary, flexible services designed primarily to help tenants maintain housing. Voluntary services are those that are available to but not demanded of tenants, such as service coordination/ case management, physical and mental health, substance use management and recovery support, job training, literacy and education, youth and children's programs, and money management.

Resources

If you or someone you know is experiencing homelessness, call this number to reach Housing Forward:

(708) 397-4423

Homeless Outreach & Intake:
outreachteam@housingforward.org

EMERGENCY HOUSING SERVICES

Suburban Cook Homelessness Prevention Call Center
 (877) 426-6515
 M - F / 8:30am - 4:30pm

Oak Park Township
 (708) 383-8005
For general assistance only.

Emergency Housing Rental Assistance
 (877) 426-6515
housingforward.org
Available through the CARES Act and Housing Forward.

EMERGENCY RENTAL AND UTILITY SERVICES

For emergency financial assistance please call Housing Forward, call (877) 426-6515.

DAYTIME SERVICES

Oak Park NAMI Mental Health Services, Drop-in Center
 816 W Harrison St, Oak Park
 (708) 524-2582
 M - Sat: 3 - 7pm

The Living Room in Broadview
 1917 W Roosevelt Rd,
 Broadview, IL 60155
 (708) 524-2582
 M - Sun: 1 - 9pm

STREET OUTREACH

Housing Forward's Street Outreach Team connects those living on the streets with resources and someone to listen.

For all communities except Oak Park and River Forest:
 (708) 979-5033
Call, leave a message or text.

For Oak Park and River Forest only:
 (708) 559-9579
Call, leave a message or text.

LEGAL AID

CARPLS Free Legal Aid
 312-738-9200

Cook County Legal Assistance Foundation
 (312) 341-1070

First Defense Legal Aid
 1 (800) LAW-REP-4

FOOD SERVICES

OAK PARK Beyond Hunger
 848 Lake St, Oak Park
 Sat: 9am - 12pm;
 1st W: 3:30 - 6:30pm;
 2nd - 5th W: 3:30 - 5:30pm

BERWYN Ebenezer Food Pantry
 1300 Harvey Ave, Berwyn
 F: 5 - 7pm; 60402, 60804,
 60644 and 60304 zip codes

MAYWOOD St. Eulalia Quinn Center
 1845 S 9th Ave Parking Lot
 Maywood, Grab & Go:
 T: 5:30-6:30pm

FOREST PARK Howard Mohr Community Center, 7640 Jackson Blvd
 Forest Park
 M - F: 9am - 2pm
Call First. Forest Park residency required.

CHICAGO Fraternité Notre Dame
 50 N Central Ave, Chicago
 M - Th: 11am - 1pm

Visit chicagofoodbank.org/
[find-food](#) for further assistance or call 311 for food pantry referrals.

CRISIS SERVICES

National Runaway Safeline
 (800) 786-2929 (RUN-AWAY)

Veteran's Crisis Line
 (800) 273-8255 / Text 838255

Amita/Presence Crisis Line
 (708) 681-4357

Sarah's Inn / Domestic Violence Hotline
 (708) 386-4225

Rape Crisis Hotline
 (888) 293-2080

Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline
 (800) 342-3720

All services are open 24/7. Visit healthconnectionhub.org for referrals.

The HUB is an online resource directory & referral platform that connects individuals to free and reduced-cost social programs and services within a broad network of local agencies and institutions.

**OAK PARK
HOMELESSNESS
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endhomelessnessoakpark.com