

Resolution on Housing First

Summary: This resolution declares housing stability as a human right and calls for a sustainably designed comprehensive housing first program to ensure a permanent end to housing instability.

Whereas the City of Bloomington Commission on Sustainability (BCOS) promotes economic development, environmental health, and social equity in our community for present and future generations;

Noting the unsustainable nature of the negative socio-economic externality wherein the main beneficiaries of Bloomington's rising costs of housing are the biggest owners of real estate, while unhoused, non-property owning residents pay the largest costs with their dignity, health and safety;

Alarmed by reports of exclusion of city residents from available housing services due to behaviors associated with disabilities, as well as the high likelihood of unhoused people to have one or more disabilities [1], while re-affirming our municipal code on non-discrimination in the provision of housing services due to disability status; [2]

Emphasizing that "housing first" approaches that include a permanent, supportive housing program that provides housing stability to all unhoused citizens may save cities as much as \$23,000 per successful program participant through the cost savings from emergency services, like police, EMS and medical services; [3]

Welcoming the City of Bloomington's efforts to minimize the size of the unhoused population by increasing the supply of affordable housing, while acknowledging that these efforts should not be expected to meet the housing needs of every resident of our city;

Affirming the human solidarity and goodwill shown by local private, nonprofit and religious organizations to help house residents through existing housing programs, while recognizing that in spite of decades of these efforts, our city continues to have residents who lack housing stability, including many who are reportedly disabled;

Declaring that the mental trauma, physical challenges, and health and safety risks experienced by residents who lack stable housing is at odds with the social equity, environmental health and economic development of our entire community; [4] and

Believing that a comprehensive "housing first" policy approach has proven to be an economically sensible, environmentally sustainable and socially equitable policy solution to ending housing instability in other US cities; [5]

now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Commission on Sustainability:

1. Urges the Bloomington Common Council, working in collaboration with the Mayor of Bloomington, to adopt housing stability as a right in its municipal code;

2. Urges the Mayor of Bloomington, working in collaboration with the Bloomington Common Council, to conduct a feasibility study and subsequently develop a housing first plan by December 25, 2021 to ensure housing stability to all residents;
3. Further urges the Mayor of Bloomington, working in collaboration with the Bloomington Common Council, to work with all stakeholders to identify and address existing gaps and barriers to achieving housing stability for all residents; and
4. Lastly, to support the long-term success of the housing first program, urges the Mayor of Bloomington, working in collaboration with the Bloomington Common Council, to identify and consider all public and private sources of funds, especially any major contributing agents to and/or beneficiaries of the rising housing costs in our city.

Submitted by: Nejla Routsong, Member, Commission on Sustainability

Endorsements: Indiana Recovery Alliance, Bloomington Homeless Coalition, Neighbors United

Passed: BCOS Public Meeting on February 9, 2021 with 7 YES votes, 0 NO votes

Supporting Members: Anna Abernathy, Jerrett Alexander, Matt Flaherty, Samantha Ginther, Nolan Hendon, Jana McGee, Nejla Routsong

Citations

- [1] All of the unhoused Bloomington residents interviewed and mentioned by Jeremy Hogan in his ongoing series linked in the three articles below explicitly describe the unhoused person as disabled in one or more ways. Furthermore, recent reports suggest that a very high percentage of the unhoused have a disability.

Hogan, Jeremy. "Thirty-nine community members who died while experiencing homelessness remembered during vigil" September 23, 2020, The Bloomingtonian, <https://bloomingtonian.com/2020/09/23/thirty-nine-community-members-who-died-while-experiencing-homelessness-remembered-during-vigil/>;

Hogan, Jeremy. "Man dies Christmas Eve at Seminary Park; cause of death under investigation" December 24, 2020, The Bloomingtonian, <https://bloomingtonian.com/2020/12/24/man-dies-christmas-eve-at-seminary-park-cause-of-death-under-investigation/>;

Hogan, Jeremy. "Mary Jane Hoene moves back to Seminary Park saying she has nowhere else to go; City to clear tents next Monday" January 4, 2021, The Bloomingtonian, <https://bloomingtonian.com/2021/01/04/mary-jane-hoene-moves-back-to-seminary-park-saying-she-has-nowhere-else-to-go-city-to-clear-tents-next-monday/>

More than half of all unhoused people living in Toronto, Canada were found to have a traumatic brain injury, which is both a neurodivergent condition and a disability. Hwang SW, Colantonio A, Chiu S, et al. "The effect of traumatic brain injury on the health of homeless people." *CMAJ*. 2008;179(8):779-784. doi:10.1503/cmaj.080341 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2553875/>

Unhoused Americans were found to be 12 times as likely to have symptoms of autism compared to the general population. Autism is both a neurodivergent condition and a disability. 13-JUN-2018, "First significant study on autism and homelessness" Autism. Sage. https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2018-06/s-fss061318.php

Americans with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be unhoused compared with the non-disabled. Diamant, Michelle. "More Than Two-Fifths Of Homeless Have Disabilities" Disability Scoop. by July 16, 2009<<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2009/07/16/homeless-report/4153/>>

- [2] Bloomington Municipal Code 2.21.020 - Public policy and purpose.

“It is the policy of the city that it does not discriminate in the provision or implementation of its programs and services on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, housing status or status as a veteran. It is the public policy of the city to provide all citizens equal opportunity for education, employment, access to public accommodations and acquisition through purchase or rental of real property, including, but not limited to: housing, and to eliminate segregation or separation based on race, religion, color, sex, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, housing status or status as a veteran, since such segregation is an impediment to equal opportunity. Equal education and employment opportunities and equal access to and use of public accommodations and equal opportunity for acquisition of real property are hereby declared to be civil rights.”

https://library.municode.com/in/bloomington/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2ADPE_CH2.21DELA_2.21.020PUPOPU

- [3] “PSH [Permanent, Supportive Housing] has been shown to be an effective intervention for people who have multiple barriers to finding and maintaining stable housing. As the concept of PSH has evolved, increasing emphasis has been placed on ensuring that it targets the highest need people, maintains low barriers to entry, and provides the same tenancy rights that any rental housing tenants would have (that is, eviction would be based on violation of the lease, and not on compliance with any program or service requirement). In some states, PSH for homeless people has played an important role in addressing the Supreme Court’s decision in the Olmstead case, which requires that people with certain disabilities be able to access the services they need while living in the community (as opposed to in an institution).” From the Center for Evidence-Based Solutions to Homelessness, Permanent Supportive Housing, Meet the Experts: Gretchen Locke, <http://www.evidenceonhomelessness.com/topic/permanent-supportive-housing/>

Aubry, Tim, Geoffrey Nelson, and Sam Tsemberis. Housing First for People with Severe Mental Illness Who are Homeless: A Review of the Research and Findings from the At Home-Chez Soi Demonstration Project. *Can J Psychiatry* 2015; 60: 467-474.

Culhane, Dennis P., Stephen Metraux, and Trevor R. Hadley. The Impact of Supportive Housing for Homeless People with Severe Mental Illness on the Utilization of the Public Health, Corrections, and Emergency Shelter Systems: The New York-New York Initiative. *Housing Policy Debate*, 2002; 13(1), 107-163; Larimer, Mary E., et al. Health Care and Public Service Use and Costs Before and After Provision of Housing for Chronically Homeless Persons with Severe Alcohol Problems. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 2009; 301(13): 1349-1357.

“There is a large and growing evidence base demonstrating that Housing First is an effective solution to homelessness. Consumers in a Housing First model access housing faster and are more likely to remain stably housed. This is true for both PSH and rapid re-housing programs. PSH has a long-term housing retention rate of up to 98 percent.vi Studies have shown that

rapid re-housing helps people exit homelessness quickly—in one study, an average of two months—and remain housed. A variety of studies have shown that between 75 percent and 91 percent of households remain housed a year after being rapidly re-housed....Finally, permanent supportive housing has been found to be cost efficient. Providing access to housing generally results in cost savings for communities because housed people are less likely to use emergency services, including hospitals, jails, and emergency shelter, than those who are homeless. One study found an average cost savings on emergency services of \$31,545 per person housed in a Housing First program over the course of two years. Another study showed that a Housing First program could cost up to \$23,000 less per consumer per year than a shelter program.” From the National Alliance to End Homelessness, Housing First, published April 20, 2016, accessed 1/7/2021.

<<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/housing-first/>> FACT SHEET ON HOUSING FIRST ATTACHED.

- [4] The UN Declaration on Human Rights includes housing, as does the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. From the UN Declaration: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

Housing as an American right was proposed by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt during his State of the Union Address delivered on Tuesday, January 11, 1944.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Bill_of_Rights>

The Monroe County Commission also recently passed a resolution declaring Housing as a Human Right. ATTACHED.

- [5] “Portland, OR - the number of chronically homeless people sleeping outside declined by 70%

Los Angeles, CA - For each chronically homeless person placed in Housing First, L.A. saved \$80,000+ over 2 years

Denver, CO - 36% reduction in chronic homelessness 2005 to 2007

Quincy, MA - 50% reduction in chronic homelessness

New York City, NY - FUSE Program 91% housed after 1 year, 53% reduction in days in jail, 92% reduction in shelter day use

Portland, ME - chronic homelessness declined by 49%” Taken from HOUSING FIRST: PROVEN SUCCESS, City and County of Honolulu <

<http://www.honolulu.gov/housing/homelessness/ohou-first.html>>