



homeward 2020

Fort Collins

# 10-Year Plan

to Make Homelessness Rare, Short-Lived  
and Non-Recurring

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*“Homeward 2020 sustained an audacious and aspirational vision and laid a strong foundation. Commitments from leaders and elected officials to continue the work is more critical than ever, as increasing homelessness persists as a top community concern.”*

– Homeward 2020 Co-Chair  
Dave Edwards

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*“With public, private and non-profit sectors, we shed light on the dire situation of homelessness and worked toward identifying causes and solutions. We must continue to be aware of needs and committed to humanitarian action.”*

– Homeward 2020 Co-Chair  
Christine Kneeland

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We will make homelessness rare, short-lived and non-recurring in Fort Collins

rare

Homelessness is mitigated whenever possible by access to affordable housing and responsive services in the community.

short-lived

System Response and re-housing interventions make experiences with homelessness as least traumatizing and short as possible.

non-recurring

Supportive services monitor housing retention and stabilization among those transitioning from homelessness or housing insecurity.

together

Homeward 2020 maintains a persistent vision for Fort Collins: together we will make homelessness rare, short-lived and non-recurring in our community. This vision and disciplined attention on the issue of homelessness has defined a decade of work and continues to carry us forward into our shared future.

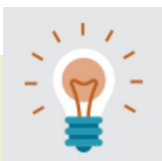
Homelessness solutions will continue to be a necessary priority in social policy and community development in Fort Collins and the region throughout the coming years. Decisive leadership and multi-sector cooperation must overcome significant system failures and inequities that have left our communities' most vulnerable people in housing insecurity, economic vulnerability, and healthcare crisis.

We know ending homelessness not only improves individual and community health, but there is also a strong economic case to provide permanent solutions for people experiencing homelessness. Most importantly, our efforts can yield life-changing results and opportunities for everyone when we focus on ending homelessness for anyone in our community.

“Homeward 2020’s vision continues to bridge us into the future with outcomes leading us to achieve individual and community wellness.”

-City of Fort Collins Mayor Wade Troxell

4 Roles of Homeward 2020



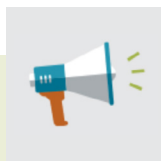
Catalyst

We bring the community together to ignite collaborative action and initiative.



Convener

We learn and strategize action together.



Advocate

We advocate for an efficient and effective system to rehouse people experiencing homelessness.



Data-driver

We collect and share data to improve understanding and drive outcomes.



# together, we will end homelessness.

## To end homelessness together, we build a strong, coordinated response.

Homeward 2020 ensured a lasting legacy from Fort Collins' Ten-Year Plan to make homelessness rare, short-lived and non-recurring. A decade of disciplined research and system development, application of key evidence-based models, data collection, consultation and technical assistance, and ongoing, community collaboration provides both a clear framework and key recommendations to carry the work forward.

Homeward 2020's blueprint for Fort Collins is a strong, housing-focused Homeless Response System where community-wide efforts consistently targets access to housing and client-centered, community-based supportive services at every point in the response continuum.

At the core of Homeward 2020 is community collaboration. Therefore, Homeward 2020 provides additional Collaboration Recommendations to enhance efforts to achieve the vision through strategic investments, activities to support inclusion and equity, coalitions to advance the work and continued data development, learning and improvement.

The insert of the Homeless Response System and Collaboration Recommendations included in this report is designed to share and keep at hand, in visual range and front of mind. It is designed to keep diverse, multi-sector stakeholders, partners and collaborators focused on shared goals, language and strategies together. Ideally, we can all see ourselves as part of the solution in knowing where or how we can provide support and resources. **Targets for the most immediate attention are highlighted in red.**

## Letter from the Director

Over the past decade, Homeward 2020 partners and stakeholders worked alongside thousands of unhoused individuals and families as they found stable homes. The initiative improved information, alignment and collaboration to implement effective solutions.

However, the systemic causes of homelessness persist and public health, public costs, public safety and public ethics concerns grow, urging local leadership to do more to respond. Increasing homelessness in Fort Collins, particularly among those we see in need of supportive healthcare and subsidized housing, is an illuminating symptom of perpetual deferment of known strategic investments and interventions. Perpetuating homelessness is more costly than housing the unhoused, and bears significant community-wide consequences and individual suffering. Increasingly, we need pragmatic and visionary civic leaders communicating clear support to end the trauma of homelessness in our communities.

**Ending homelessness is a function of responsive leadership. Thank you for your leadership.**

We also know elected leaders, local government and our public sector decision-makers are key to our social health and social change along with us. Communities seeing the greatest impact ending homelessness

have public administrators who prioritize durable local funding and resources to the homeless response system. They consistently monitor progress ensuring their community is healthy and stably housed. Stable housing is not only the most widely researched and proven solution to end homelessness, but also the greatest determinant of individual and community health.

**My recommendation to Homeward 2020's extensive community of committed stakeholders is that together, we compel elected and administrative government leaders, policy decision-makers and community investors to provide adequate resources to the response system and collaboration to ensure a healthy, housed community for all.** Alongside our community, Homeward 2020 built a broad, supportive platform for our civic leaders to invest in the vision to make homelessness rare, short-lived and non-recurring. We will end homelessness by bringing solutions to scale. We can no longer absolve ourselves, our systems and our leaders from accountability and responsibility to try. We know what to do to end homelessness.

Thank you for the privilege to work alongside you.  
- Holly LeMasurier

Archives of Homeward 2020 reports, presentations, strategies and resources can be found at:  
[homeward2020.org](http://homeward2020.org)

# The solution to homelessness is a strong Homeless Response System

A successful homeless response system is a coordinated, regional response centered in the principles and practices of **Housing First and Supportive Housing**. The system is data and performance driven and strives to achieve **Functional Zero**: where homelessness is prevented whenever possible, and if it is experienced, there is a supported return to housing as soon as possible. Funding and resources are aligned to reach performance targets, and partnerships provide specialized, niche services to ensure effective stabilization for unique populations. Access to appropriate affordable housing and responsive supportive services is essential at all points of the continuum.

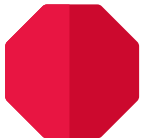
## Prevention



Reduce the number of people entering the crisis system pipeline through increased proactive prevention resources.

- **Prevent institutional discharges to homelessness (foster care, jail/prison, recovery/behavioral health centers)**
- Low barrier, flexible Eviction Prevention and Emergency Rental Assistance funds
- Landlord mediation services
- Multiple household subsidies coordinated to reduce household cost burdens
- Early identification and referral process for housing retention intervention

## Diversion



Reduce the number of people who need ongoing emergency shelter by assisting people to resolve immediate crisis by accessing safe alternative solutions offered upfront.

- **Centralized, flexible emergency problem-solving funds**
- Family reunification and conflict resolution services
- Assist reconnections to reliable social supports
- Financial support for safe co-habitation with friends or family (food, bills, rent)

## Emergency Shelter



Provide low-barrier, 24/7 safe places for people to stay temporarily, meet basic needs such as shelter, food and hygiene, and be actively supported on a pathway to housing.

- Coordinated intake and assessment quickly assigns people to appropriate resources
- Outreach to those not accessing shelter and supportive services
- Onsite or instant referrals for medical and mental health services for people in need of immediate healthcare
- **Onsite navigation/case management assistance with document preparation, rent, housing and benefits assistance applications and housing search**

## Housing



Increase the number of people who exit the system to affordable housing through Permanent Supportive Housing for the most vulnerable and maximizing Rapid Rehousing.

- **Expand inventory of deeply affordable (0-30%AMI) housing units** dedicated to programs through Tenant Selection Plans and property owner partners
- Diversify housing choice with vouchers, shallow subsidies and rapid rehousing
- **Community Landlord Engagement and incentives to secure units**
- **Hotel/motel acquisitions and Master Leasing options** for niche transitional or permanent supportive housing (youth, seniors, recovery, family, domestic violence)

## Supportive Services



Increase permanent housing retention with services designed to help the individual or family stay housed and live a safe, stable, healthy and empowered life in the community.

- Resident and Tenancy Support Services onsite
- Self-sufficiency enhancements: employment, training and education program placements
- **Benefits enrollment assistance: SSI/SSDI, Medicaid/Medicare, food stamps, unemployment**
- **Low-barrier, Medication Assisted Treatment for substance use disorder**
- Legal Aid

# Community Action

## Strategic Investing

Convene providers annually to create shared recommendations to fill system gaps.

**Open a Housing Solution Fund at NoCo CoC to accept business, corporate and private donations.**

Define and monetize a sustainable, target funding model to support the Response System: 40% Fed-CDBG, HOME, ESG/40% State & Local taxes, funds/20% donors, grants.

Work with churches as partners to develop affordable housing on congregation lands.

Unite health, housing and justice sector partners for strategic Social Impact Investing in FUSE.

**Consider a 2021 County Housing Solutions Ballot Initiative modeled from Denver's 2B and Larimer County Behavioral Health ballot initiatives.**

## Learning and Improvement

Focus community learning on understanding of the Response System and best practices.

**Enhance community involvement and organizing through diverse engagement - open houses, the arts, political action mobilization, community-wide trainings, etc.**

Convene regional Housing Authorities and developers to support, strategize and grow affordable housing options across the county and NoCo region.

Enhance recovery housing supports for people with both mental health conditions and substance use disorder.

## Equity & Access

**Provide training and technical assistance to implement Trauma-Informed Care across the community.**

Host education events to understand and overcome the impacts of racism, classism and ableism.

Target 20% representation from people with lived experience in staffs and decision-making bodies.

**Focus development on deeply affordable housing (0-30%AMI), studio and 1BDRM units, enhancing people's ability to attain and sustain housing without dependence on services and systems.**

## Information and Data

Publish real-time, accessible data and program performance on public platforms.

Secure a real-time, by-name-list of persons experiencing homelessness.

**Consistently incorporate user stories and lived experience to improve services.**

Create 'surge' goals to aggressively drive down homelessness through target campaigns, partnerships and investments.

**Centralize and celebrate vetted landlords seeking to partner with programs to end homelessness.**

## Aligning Advocacy

Convey and affirm homelessness is solvable.

**Utilize shared platforms of Public Health, Social Determinants of Health, Human Rights, Anti-Poverty and Criminal Justice Reform to build solidarity between social, political and economic justice movements.**

Focus on elected representatives, government administrators and public sector leaders for accountability and actions to end housing inequality and homelessness.

**Produce locally-relevant events, data and tools to amplify involvement in priority budget, policy, legislation and decision-making processes.**



These **Collaboration Recommendations** identify community-wide transformative work to both realize a vision to end homelessness while also driving broad solidarity for institutional and sectoral change to address housing disparity. In addition to strengthening the Homelessness Response System, these collective efforts across housing, health and human services sectors will advance policy, programs and partnerships to achieve the vision of Homeward 2020 and our allies.

# What causes homelessness?

## Poor Health and Lack of Appropriate Care

Health and homelessness are inextricably linked. Health problems can cause household instability and are dramatically exacerbated by the homeless experience. People experiencing homelessness suffer from chronic diseases, physical disabilities, mental health disorders, substance use disorders, cognitive disabilities and trauma at far higher rates than the population-at-large. Chronic disease and acute problems are difficult to manage and worsen while homeless. With a safe, stable home as an essential foundation, medical diagnosis, planned healthcare interventions, treatment and recovery are far more effective. Housing is healthcare.

### Of people experiencing long-term homelessness in Fort Collins:

- 50% self-identify as disabled.
- 44% say they are struggling with mental health issues or substance use disorders.
- 50% are enrolled in Medicaid to assist with medical care costs and coordination.

\*Source Housing First Initiative

## Housing is Out of Reach

There is a lack of housing options that low and limited income people can afford. Today, most households become homeless because they simply do not make enough money to pay for housing and other household necessities. Without affordable housing as a secure base, people are forced into greater financial risk, household instability, eviction and, increasingly, widespread homelessness.

**434 people are experiencing long-term homelessness (six months or longer) in Fort Collins today.**

**\$1000** Montly cost of a modest 1 bedroom rental home

Working at minimum wage  
**\$11.10/hour**  
each week you have to work  
**73 hours**

to afford a modest 1 bedroom rental home.

**\$809** Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Monthly Payment in Colorado (65+, blind or disabled)

**17%** poverty rate in Fort Collins

**9,000+ households in Fort Collins are extremely cost burdened, paying more than 50% of their income on housing.**

## Escaping Violence and an Unsafe Home

A domestic violence episode is commonly reported among women, youth and families experiencing homelessness. Youth homelessness is often rooted in family and household conflict, household insecurity due to poverty or lack of acceptance at home. Mental health disorders, substance abuse, exposure to trauma or neglect can drive people to escape an unsafe home.

- 26% of people experiencing long-term homelessness in Fort Collins report abuse or violence in the home as a cause.
- 90% of minors accessing youth shelters report violence or fighting at home.
- 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+ and state family rejection as a contributing factor of homelessness.

## Racial Disparities, Discrimination and Other Systemic Barriers

Most minority groups in the U.S. are overrepresented in homelessness. The effects of long-standing racial discrimination linger and perpetuate disparities, as well as discrimination against persons with criminal records, the LGBTQ+ community and persons utilizing housing vouchers. In addition, many individuals who are homeless face numerous other systemic barriers to accessing housing: credit issues, poor tenant record, criminal histories, proof of sufficient income, savings for move-in costs and more.

### Larimer County Population/People Experiencing Long-term Homelessness in Fort Collins:

Race	Population	Homeless
White	82%	56%
Multiracial	2%	3%
Black, African American	.9%	3%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	.5%	6%

\*Sources: Larimer County Demographics; Housing First Initiative



# the Fort Collins 10-year plan

**to Make Homelessness Rare, Short-Lived and Non-Recurring**

In 2006, a UniverCity Connections community conversation identified concerns about rapid development and changes in Fort Collins leaving many people displaced and falling through the cracks as progress surged ahead. A Homelessness Initiatives Task Force was created in 2008 to explore ways Fort Collins could work collaboratively to address growing homelessness. The group invited the Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness to visit local leaders. This introduced Fort Collins to the nationwide 10 - Year Plan effort, and in 2009 Fort Collins became one of over three hundred communities to adopt the model. The community-wide vision was forged and the collaborative work to end homelessness catalyzed as Homeward 2020, with stable housing as the core strategy.

## Phase 1 (2009-2012)

- Established organization focus on ending chronic homelessness through supportive housing and preventing episodic homelessness through rental assistance and subsidies
- Creation of multi-sector Community Collaborative & Project Teams.
- Community Mapping & Performance Improvement Clinic
- First Point-In-Time Count & Project Homeless Connect
- North Front Range Continuum of Care leadership

## Phase 2 (2013-2016)

- 10-Year Plan midterm Community Conversation
- Explore feasibility of localized Homeless Management Information System
- Develop Outreach Fort Collins for downtown response
- Implement Coordinated Entry System (CAHPS)
- Assist implementation of Redtail Ponds Permanent Supportive Housing project
- North Front Range Continuum of Care leadership

## Phase 3 (2017-2020)

- Design and develop accessible data dashboard and outcome reporting
- Partner to pilot scattered site supportive housing models
- Convene Provider Network bi-annually to create shared Homeless Response System framework and capacity-building
- Host Community and Leadership Learning Series focused on Homelessness Solutions
- Launch FUSE Initiative targeting those in most frequent life-threatening crisis
- Strengthen the nexus and partner projects between Housing and Health sectors
- Northern Colorado Continuum of Care leadership



# beyond 2020

Homeward 2020 appreciates the diverse stakeholders who contributed to the initiative over the past decade, and commit to sustain the vision moving forward. With non-profits, government, social service organizations, faith leaders, developers, donors, foundations and financiers - and most importantly with people who strive every day to overcome the housing crisis - we mobilized to solve one of society's greatest challenges. Below are a few highlighted projects that continue to build capacity in our local response into the future. These include continuing data collection and reporting, addressing chronic and complex homelessness, expanding inclusion and access, and focusing on continuous improvement.

## Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

This regional data platform will collect information from Larimer and Weld county homeless assistance providers on homelessness inflow and outflow, as well as track achievement of system performance targets. Real-time information and specific reports will be easily accessed.

## HFI & FUSE

Housing First Initiative and Frequent Utilizer Engagement continue at Homeward Alliance. Both programs focus on service enriched permanent housing solutions and Housing First approaches. The emphasis is on improving health and housing stability and retention through care coordination among multiple agencies in a 'scattered site' model.

## Outreach Fort Collins

Like most cities, downtown areas concentrate people seeking emergency shelter and services, and downtown was the initial focus of street outreach in Fort Collins, as well. Future efforts will expand to include other areas of town and natural areas. Trained outreach workers are increasingly deployed to reduce costly law enforcement and 911 encounters.

## NoCo Continuum of Care

Weld and Larimer agencies collaborated for many years, but recently officially united efforts in Northern Colorado as a federally-recognized Continuum of Care (CoC's). This model advances efforts between neighboring communities to fill gaps, expand access to affordable housing, and maximize public resources.

## Built for Zero

A nationwide program helping over 80 communities pursue 'functional zero' - a state where the level of active homelessness is lower than the number of people rehoused monthly. Through BFZ, all Colorado CoC's are given tools and direct support to implement best practices, develop reliable data systems, build new skills and discover novel solutions, together.

## COVID-19 Shelter Response

Homeward 2020 was an early advocate for coordinated COVID-19 homelessness response. Partners remain committed to keeping people experiencing homelessness safe for the duration of this pandemic. Ongoing effort focusses on safe shelter, preventing outbreaks, and protections for the most vulnerable.

## LEEP

Lived Experience as Expertise Project (LEEP) is a leadership development and placement program for people who have navigated our local community systems from homelessness to housing. It is designed to recruit, train and place program participants on Boards, Commissions, Project Teams and other planning and decision-making groups.

## Emergency Shelter Initiative

An Advisory Group will continue work to identify critical emergency shelter space and design targeted service delivery. Fort Collins seeks to update facilities and ensure essential services are adequately resourced so every person entering shelter quickly receives efficient intake, crisis and rehousing supports.

## COVID-19 Recovery: Rapid Response Housing Surge

COVID-19 presented urgent needs for safe shelter and simultaneously required a plan for long-term recovery. Anticipating widespread increases in homelessness, communities are advised to build a strong infrastructure focused on rehousing services. Homeward 2020 convened partners to design aggressive Rapid Response Housing Surge programs and strategic investment models targeting housing crisis triage for 150 individuals and families. Services include rent assistance, housing search, landlord outreach and housing stability services. Local CDBG and CARES Act funding with significant state of Colorado COVID response funding is allocated to local agencies to implement Rapid Rehousing programs. Providers are adding staff to prepare for implementation.



# who we are

Homelessness is a community-wide issue requiring community-wide involvement in solutions. Homeward 2020 was a collaborative, multi-sector community think-tank guiding implementation of Fort Collins' 10-Year Plan and served as a dynamic and persistent hub of inspiring innovation. We did this by being data driven, setting priorities, developing alignment for outcomes, catalyzing action and suggesting policy to create a securely housed and healthy community for all.



***We can solve this.***

**And we don't need to change a lot of what we are doing - we just need the solutions resourced at a scale to reach more people.**

- Homeward Alliance Executive Director  
David Rout



**Affordable housing is a worthwhile and cost-effective community development investment, and the key to decreasing community homelessness. *The vision is achievable.***

- Care Housing Executive Director Steve Kuehneman

**With the timely establishment of the Continuum of Care, we have a next backbone organization to continue to carry the roles and the work forward.**

- Larimer County Economic and Human Services Director Laura Walker

**Emergency shelter is a necessary and vital community service designed to engage individuals and families in moments of crisis, offering stability and safety, as well as serving as a critical point-of-entry for identifying and accessing crucial supportive services.**

- Catholic Charities Larimer Director Joe Domko

**Homeward 2020 helped us understand the causes of homelessness, gaps to fill and a sustainable system model. The work now evolves to a regional scope, and we know government has many roles to support the collaboration ahead.**

- City of Fort Collins Chief Sustainability Officer Jackie Kozak-Thiel



**We need more understanding of how to finance and build more affordable housing.**

**It is complicated with many barriers and regulations, but municipal departments and services can play a role to improve and facilitate the process.**

- Downtown Development Authority Executive Director Matt Robenalt



**Homeward 2020 was a catalyst in developing compelling social services data and reporting. When the community is well informed, the funders can better support the fundraising needs of agencies.**

- United Way Larimer County Vice President Claire Bouchard

## Thanks and appreciation

**Community Foundation of Northern Colorado** - for being the fiscal agent for Homeward 2020; **City of Fort Collins** - for supporting our Memorandum of Understanding to advance homelessness initiatives; **Bohemian Foundation** - for providing ongoing office and meeting space for the director and collaborative; **Foundations and Donors** - for your contributions to sustain the work of Homeward 2020; **Homeward 2020 Community Collaborative Co-Chairs** - Christine Kneeland and David Edwards for leading with bold vision and tireless vigilance.

# homelessness is solvable

*The crucial work before us: 1. Continuing to build the coalition to businesses, the wider public, and Larimer County, and 2. Forging a dynamic collaborative continuum between shelters and housing providers.*

- Fort Collins Rescue Mission Director Seth Forwood

*I would like to thank Sister Mary Alice Murphy for showing me and our Community the unmet needs of our Homeless citizens. Without her wisdom and spirit where would our Homeless citizens be today!*

- Kneeland & Lazure Law Attorney Bill Kneeland



*Moving forward, it is important to educate and grow deeper engagement with the business sector.*

*Healthy community is a conversation for all of us, and partnerships with the business community will be impactful.*

- FirstBank President Nicole Staudinger



*Our housing, health and mental health are SO intertwined - we must tackle them together.*

- Health District of Northern Larimer Executive Director Carol Plock

*Participation in Homeward2020 and partnering with such terrific people and organizations has been an honor. Kudos to the founders, leaders and collaborative members for the great success and momentum, as demonstrated by hundreds of people having stable homes!*

- Neighbor to Neighbor Executive Director Kelly Evans

**City of Fort Collins and Northern Colorado Continuum of Care**

**proudly sustain the Homeward 2020 vision to make homelessness rare, short-lived and non-recurring.**



*We have the information we need to act. The players and relationships are in place. We can do this.*

- Fort Collins Police Services Chief  
Jeff Swoboda



*The work is not done and we would be remiss not to recognize the uncertainty the pandemic brings. As a community, we need to remain focused and committed to making homelessness rare, short-lived and non-recurring by supporting and building a sustainable system.*

- Bohemian Foundation Executive Director  
Cheryl Zimlich

*We have been health partners since the beginning and gained a lot from hearing project and progress updates and figuring out how partners can work together rather than duplicate effort.*

- SummitStone Health Partner Community Based Programs Director  
Stephanie Madsen-Pixler



*Collaboration is a hallmark of our community. Together we've established a strong and effective roadmap to genuinely help our citizens. Now is the time to pool and commit our resources.*

- Former COFC Deputy City Manager  
Diane Jones



## Resources

**Colorado Office of Homeless Initiatives:**  
[cdola.colorado.gov/office-of-homeless-initiatives](http://cdola.colorado.gov/office-of-homeless-initiatives)

**Community Solutions:** [community.solutions](http://community.solutions)

**Corporation for Supportive Housing:** [csh.org](http://csh.org)

**Funders Together to End Homelessness:**  
[funderstogether.org](http://funderstogether.org)

**Healthcare for the Homeless:** [nhchc.org](http://nhchc.org)

**The Hub for Ending Homelessness-USA:**  
Facebook

**Invisible People:** [invisiblepeople.tv](http://invisiblepeople.tv)

**National Alliance to End Homelessness:**  
[endhomelessness.org](http://endhomelessness.org)

**National Homelessness Law Center:** [nlchp.org](http://nlchp.org)

**National Low-Income Housing Coalition:**  
[nlihc.org](http://nlihc.org)

**Northern Colorado Continuum of Care:**  
[nocococ.org](http://nocococ.org)

