



# Community Forum

Providing support to Oak Park's unhoused population

# Panelists



**Kylon Hooks**

Deputy Chief  
Illinois Office to  
Prevent and End  
Homelessness



**Lynda Schueler**

CEO  
Housing Forward



**John Harris**

Oak Park  
Homelessness  
Coalition



**Vanessa Matheny**

Grants Supervisor  
Village of Oak Park

# Village of Oak Park Community Forum

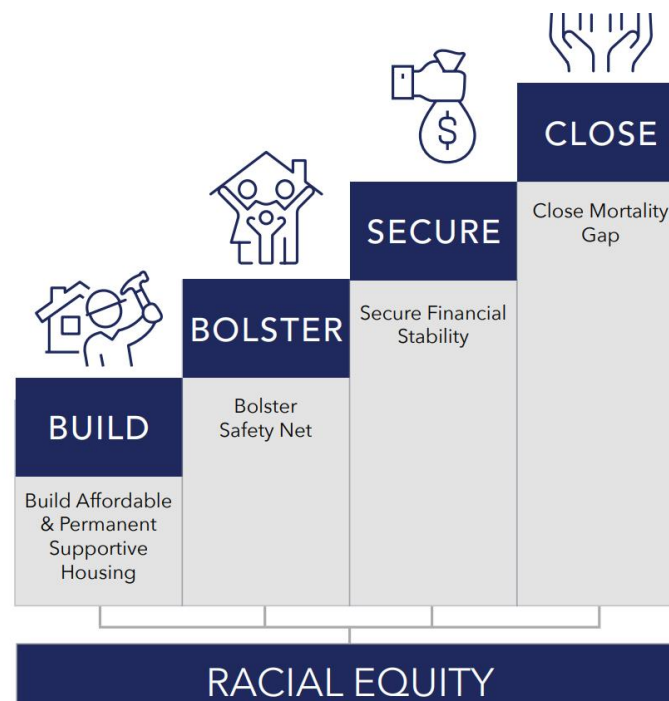
Chief Homelessness Officer, Christine Haley  
Deputy Chief Homelessness Officer, Kylon Hooks

November 30, 2023



## Governor Pritzker's Executive Order (EO) to Fight Homelessness

"Home Illinois is the foundation for meeting EO goals by coordinating State of Illinois agency strategies and investments and partnering with the community to build a strong safety net and permanent housing for Illinoisans facing homelessness and housing insecurity."





## Functional Zero: A Measurable Metric for Success

- “**Functional Zero**” is a sustainable milestone where a community has measurably solved homelessness.
- Once achieved, when an Illinoisian reaches out for help, there is a clear path to access that resource and the appropriate resource on the other side
- Homelessness within Functional Zero is:
  - Rare
  - Brief
  - Non-recurring
  - Equitable

### Executive Order 2021-21 Parallel:

“Whereas the current crisis has created waves of economic instability which have affected Illinoisans most vulnerable to housing insecurity. It requires the strengthening of our State’s safety nets so that homelessness becomes an experience that is **rare, brief and non-recurring...**”

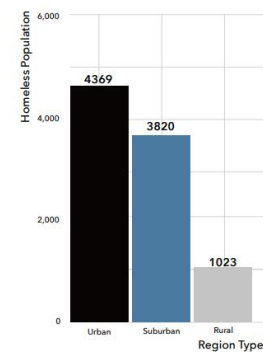
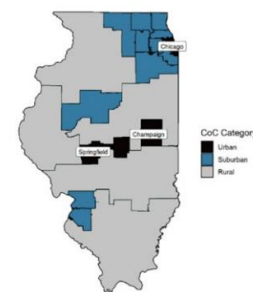


## Homelessness in Illinois

- Where populations experiencing homelessness are impacted throughout the region
- Illinoisians experiencing homelessness in Cook County

### 54% of Illinoisans experiencing homelessness in 2022 reside in Cook County

Point-in-Time Counts from January, 2022





## Root Causes of Homelessness:

- Lack of Affordable Housing
- Economic instability/lack of adequate income
- Lack of appropriate service offerings and provision

Annually, 44,063 people in 27,733 households are served in Illinois' literal homeless system, of whom an estimated:

- 18% live with severe mental illnesses
- 12% live with chronic substance use disorders
- 5% are veterans
- 8% are survivors of domestic violence
- 6% are youth ages 18-24
- 5% are parenting youth, or children of parenting youth



## Homelessness Support Responses:

### Homeless Prevention

- Keeping families in their homes with financial support
- Eviction diversion/legal support

### Crisis Response

- Shelter diversion
- Emergency and short-term shelter
- Co-locating shelters + other services, e.g. child care within a child care desert

### Housing

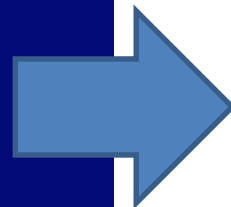
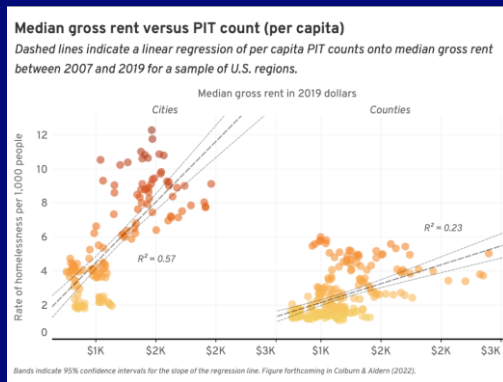
- Short term rental assistance + case management
- Permanent Supportive Housing/ “Housing First”

### Workforce

- Increasing the homeless workforce
- Supporting people experiencing homelessness access to work



## Theory: Homelessness is a Housing Problem



Groundbreaking research from Gregg Colburn and Clayton Aldern reframes homelessness as an issue of **insufficient affordable housing**.

According to their study, levels of homelessness are better predicted by **housing-related metrics** (median rent, rental vacancy rates, etc.) than historic targets of homelessness programs (mental illness, drug use, poverty, weather, generosity of public assistance, and low-income mobility).

## Reaching Functional Zero Unmet Need: Housing Projections



4,551 Shelter Beds



9,421 Rapid ReHousing Units (short-term rental assistance with supportive services)



6,292 Permanent Supportive Housing Units (affordable housing units with supportive services)







## Persons Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness:

Persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness are persons residing in locations not meant for human habitation. i.e. vehicles, outdoor encampments, etc.

- Local Continuum of Care conduct annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Counts based on HUD criteria of homelessness.
- For purposes of the PIT count, HUD considers individuals and families sleeping in a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g., abandoned buildings, train stations, or camping grounds) as “unsheltered” homeless.\*
- Additionally, HUD generally considers those sleeping in a garage, shed, or other location outside of a housing structure, but on the property of a housing structure as “unsheltered” homelessness for purposes of the PIT count. \*

\* [For purposes of the Point-in-Time \(PIT\) count, who does HUD consider - HUD Exchange](#)





## Persons Experiencing Sheltered Homelessness:

Persons who are experiencing sheltered homelessness may be residing in emergency congregate (open-floor/gymnasium) or non-congregate shelters. i.e. hotels, motels, short-term subsidized apartment units.

- HUD defines sheltered homeless persons as adults, and children who, on the night of the count, are living in shelters.\*
- This includes all beds dedicated for use by persons experiencing homelessness reported by a CoC in a Housing Inventory Count (HIC) including dedicated beds located in:\*
- Emergency shelters, safe havens, hotel, motel, or apartment vouchers paid by a public or private agency\*
- Transitional housing, including:
  - HUD-funded Rapid Re-housing Demonstration Grant programs.\*

\* [A Guide to Counting Sheltered Homeless People \(Third Revision\) \(hudexchange.info\)](http://hudexchange.info)





## Individuals/Families Doubled-Up and Couch Surfing:

Individuals and families who are doubled-up, can be multiple individuals or families residing in a unit intended for single individual or family use.

Couch surfing is also a form of homelessness. It is one of the most common types of homelessness amongst youth. It can be a result of many variables including:

- Conflict in home relationships
- Fleeing domestic/intimate partner violence
- Substance use

Couch-surfing families account for three-quarters of the more than 1 million homeless students in U.S. public schools, according to data from the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program. Yet this growing population is traditionally shut out of the housing aid system, which regards them as less vulnerable because, technically, they are housed.\*

\* [Homeless families who couch surf are getting fast-tracked to housing - CSMonitor.com](https://www.csmmonitor.com/homeless-families-who-couch-surf-are-getting-fast-tracked-to-housing/)





## PIT Count – State of Illinois/Oak Park

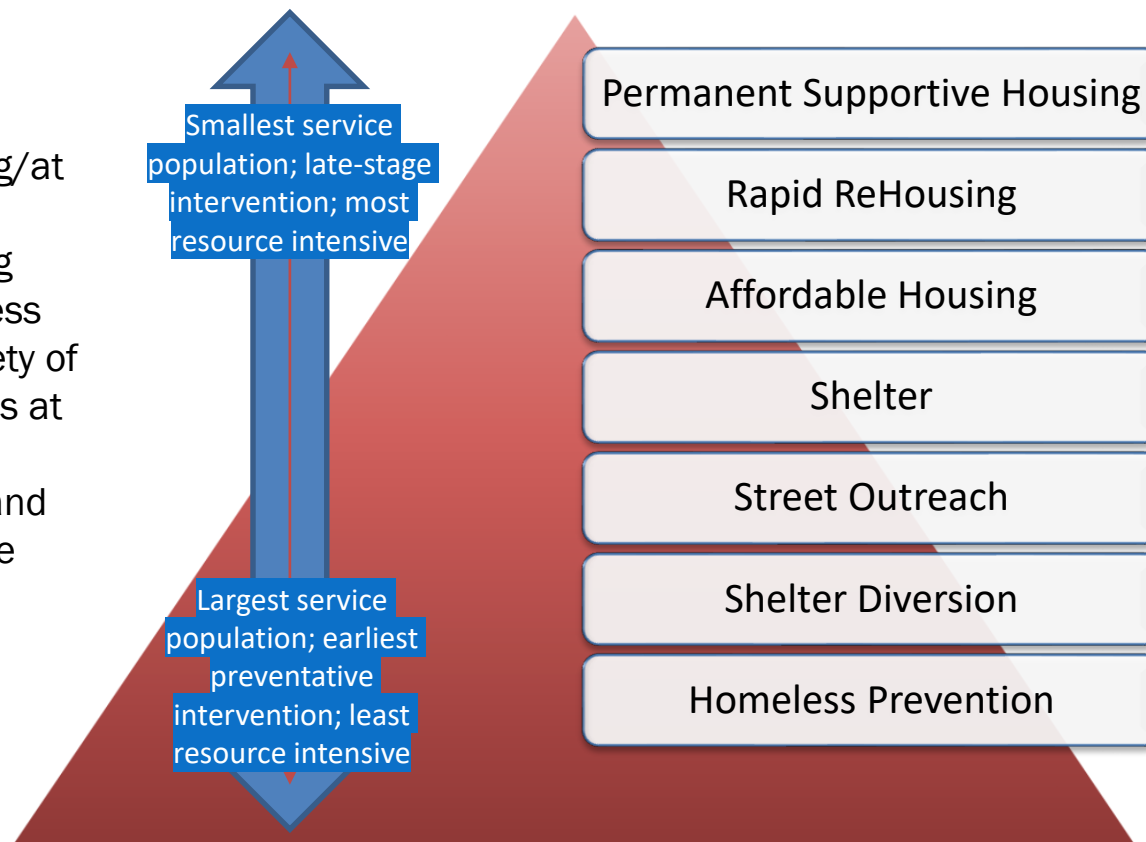
- The 2022 Illinois PIT count showed 9212 persons experiencing homelessness, compared to the 2020 PIT count of 10431 persons experiencing homelessness—exemplifying a 12% reduction between 2020 and 2022.
- Suburban Cook CoC reported 1056 persons experiencing homelessness in the 2023 PIT count, compared to 1096 in the 2022 PIT count; a 4% reduction.
- Oak Park resides within the West Suburban Region of the Suburban Cook CoC. The West Suburban Cook Region reported 300 sheltered persons experiencing homelessness and 35 unsheltered in the 2023 PIT count.
- Challenges with Counting methods
  - PIT Annual basis
  - Populations not recorded through Coordinated Entry Systems





## The Continuum of Home Illinois Interventions

- Individuals experiencing/at risk of experiencing homelessness need a variety of interventions at different intensities and stages in the process





## Listening Sessions and Survey Preliminary Qualitative Analysis

In the month of October, OPEH held 13 listening sessions across the state, both in person and virtually, to receive input on proposed priorities to be included in the Home Illinois FY25-26 Plan.

Feedback from community stakeholders such as, service providers, and persons with lived expertise was gathered in order to collaboratively combat homelessness in Illinois.

Preliminary, common, emergent themes from the qualitative analysis of listening session feedback and survey questions are:

- Racial Equity
- Mental Health/Substance Use Disorders
- Increased Affordable Housing Availability
- Homelessness Prevention Strategies







## Racial Equity

- Black individuals facing homelessness expressed feelings of not being prioritized in locating housing and access to resources for staying housed.
- Experiences of systemic racism along with not being able to afford housing in a rental market where housing stock is low and/or unattainable in communities, perpetuate racial inequity and homelessness.

## Mental Health/Substance Use Disorders (SUD)

- Those living with mental illnesses and/or substance use disorders should not be left to fend for themselves once housing has been obtained.
- Need to reduce the delay in mental health service provision was commonly expressed, along with inclusion of more mental health specialists.
- Long wait times for treatment may leave gaps in client/participants being located; therefore increased need for more timely outreach.





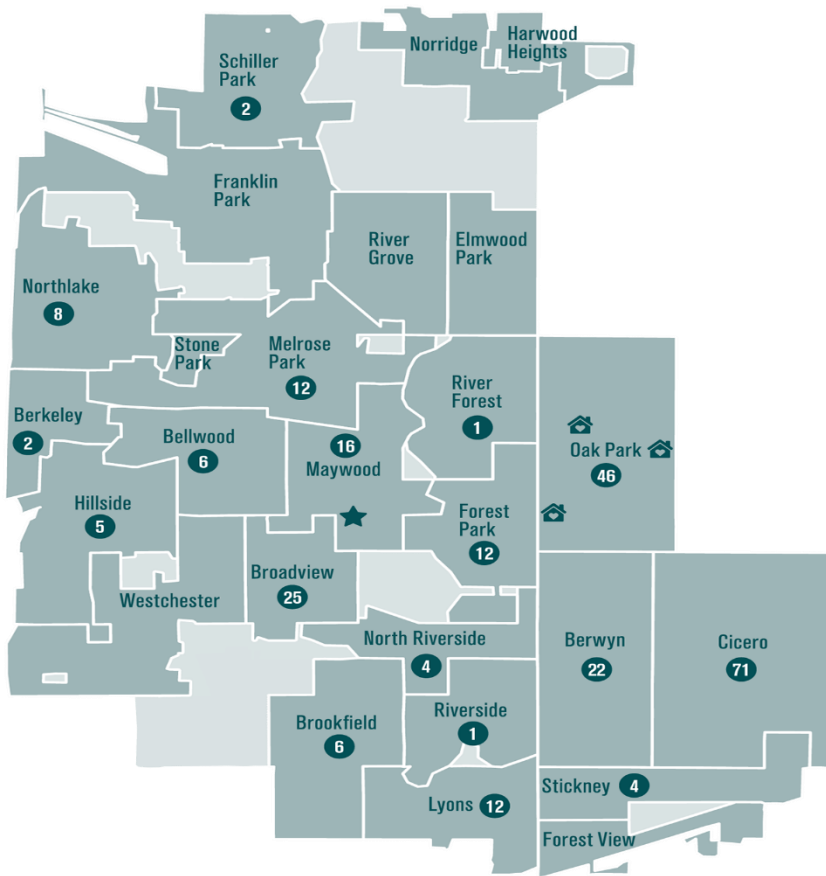
## **Increase Affordable Housing Availability**

- Creating low-barrier access to affordable housing options
- Attention and resources directed toward increasing income stability supports and more
- Addressing flexible income eligibility limits

## **Homelessness Prevention Strategies**

- Funding availability and disbursement structures
- Increase in Peer Support Programs. I.e. Peer Support Groups/Peer support specialists
- Maintain quality landlord/tenant relations





**housing**  
**FORWARD**  
ending homelessness

**SERVICE AREA**  
25+ communities in  
west suburban Cook  
County

- Housing Forward Headquarters
- Interim Housing Locations
- Supportive Housing Locations\*

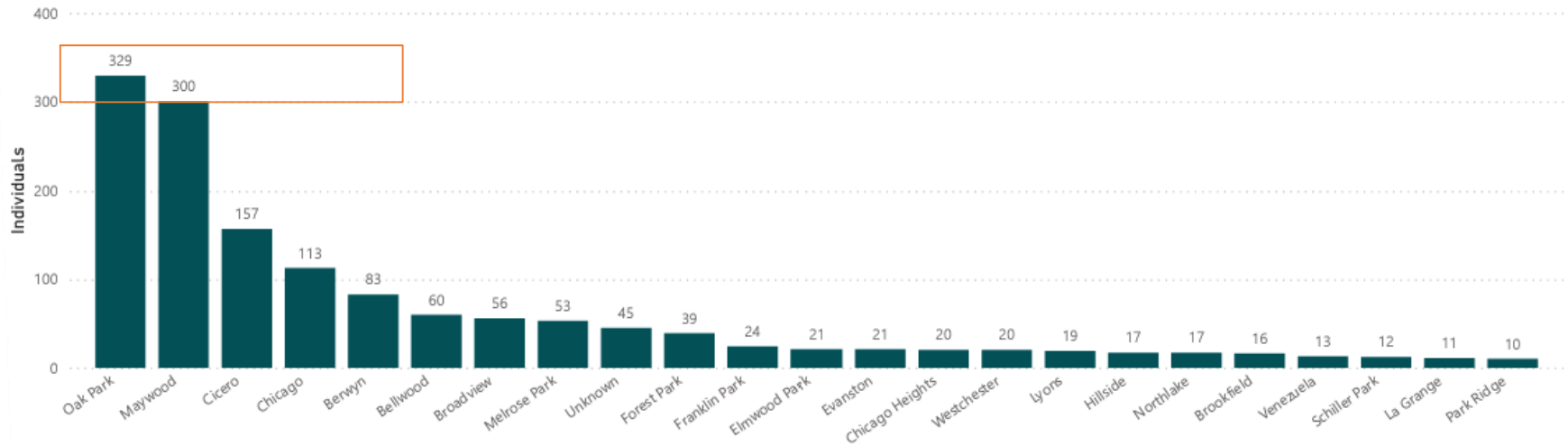
\*Additional units in Burbank (1), Justice (1), and LaGrange (2)

# Served by Community

TOTAL Individuals Served  
Quarter 1-3

**1652** \*Unduplicated

## Communities with More than 10 Individuals



\*Unknown = Community not collected at time of intake, clients that did not provide community of origin, and/or data not entered into HMIS

Quarter 1-3 2023

# THE SOLUTION



# A SYSTEM TO End HOMELESSNESS

prevent



respond



stabilize





A SYSTEM TO **End** HOMELESSNESS

## IN ACTION

### MAURICE & DIANE: THEIR PATH TO HOUSING STABILITY

response to homelessness

stabilize in housing

street  
outreach



medical  
respite



interim  
housing



supportive  
housing



**OAK PARK  
HOMELESSNESS  
COALITION**

**Thursday, November 30, 2023**



# The Oak Park Homelessness Coalition

**OAK PARK  
HOMELESSNESS  
COALITION**

**50**

Over Fifty Organizations Strong

**5**

Acting in Five Distinct Work Groups

**1**

With One Plan to End Homelessness

## Five Work groups

- Affordable Housing
- Career Pathways
- Communications & Advocacy
- Community Integration
- Street Outreach

# The Plan

- **Strengthen Affordable and Supportive Housing Pathways**
- **Prevent Homelessness Through Coordination and Improved Safety Net**
- **Strengthen Behavioral Health Services Coordination**
- **Increase Employment and Economic Stability**
- **Provide Data-Driven Advocacy to Reach Functional Zero in Oak Park**
- **Develop a Sustainable and Equitable Infrastructure**



# Essential Resources for Housing Stability

## FRAP (Flexible Rental Assistance Program)

- Funded by the Village of Oak Park and supported by Housing Forward and the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition.
- Essential support includes rental assistance, utility aid, security deposits, and short-term emergency expenses.
- Temporary lifeline helping individuals maintain stable housing during challenging periods.

Learn more at [endhomelessnessoakpark.com](http://endhomelessnessoakpark.com)

## Oak Park Township Assistance Programs

### Emergency Assistance: Immediate Relief for Sudden Hardships

- Immediate relief for Oak Park and River Forest residents facing sudden financial challenges, including rent, mortgage, or utility expenses.

### General Assistance: Localized Financial Aid

- Locally administered program designed for individuals ineligible for state or federal assistance, providing aid for basic needs.

**For more information about eligibility or to schedule an appointment, please call (708) 383-8005.**

# Resources for Those Currently Unhoused

## Street Outreach Card

Pocket handout card filled with information on various services in Oak Park, including those pertaining to crises, family support, food, education, employment and more.

## Overnight Shelter

### St. Catherine's – St. Lucy

- 38 N. Austin Blvd, Oak Park
- Accommodates 20 guests nightly from 7:00 pm to 6:30 am, seven days a week through April.
- Entry coordination is managed by Housing Forward's Street Outreach Team.
- For inquiries, contact the Support Center at (708) 338-1724, ext. 289.

## Emergency Warming Center

### Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

- 611 Randolph St, Oak Park
- Opens a 24/7 emergency center for 20 people during severe weather when temperatures drop below five degrees.

# What to Do When Approached by Someone Panhandling or Experiencing Homelessness

If approached by someone panhandling or experiencing homelessness, remember our shared humanity. Kindness, dignity, and compassion matter. A simple conversation is a helpful act of kindness. Here's how you can help:

- Provide a pocket resource card with information on homelessness, mental health and financial assistance services.
- Donate or volunteer with Oak Park organizations such as Beyond Hunger, Housing Forward, or the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition.

#### **For Outreach and Support:**

Contact Suburban Cook Call Center at 877-426-6515 or email [outreachteam@housingforward.org](mailto:outreachteam@housingforward.org). Open Mon-Fri, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM.

#### **Addressing Safety Concerns:**

In situations involving criminal or unsafe behavior, contact Oak Park Police Department. **Emergency: 911 / Non-emergency: 708-386-3800**

#### **Mental Health Crisis Support**

For anyone dealing with a mental health crisis, contact Thrive Counseling Center at 708-383-7500, option 1. Available 24/7, every day.

# Resources

## State of Illinois

- [IDHS: Home Illinois, Illinois' Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness \(state.il.us\)](https://www.state.il.us/IDHS/HomeIllinois)
- Email: [homeless.office@illinois.gov](mailto:homeless.office@illinois.gov)
- Phone: 312-793-1533
- [IDHS: Ending Homelessness \(state.il.us\)](https://www.state.il.us/IDHS/EndingHomelessness) to join our email list

## Oak Park

- Village of Oak Park: <https://www.oak-park.us/our-community/community-relations/resources-unhoused>
- Housing Forward: <https://www.housingforward.org/>
- Oak Park Homelessness Coalition: <https://www.endhomelessnessoakpark.com/>

# Questions

