

## Denver's Approach to Addressing Homelessness

- The City & County of Denver values all members of the community. We are focused on connecting those in need with appropriate services, and we are constantly seeking new partners and better ways to serve vulnerable populations. Under Mayor Hancock's leadership, the City & County of Denver dedicates significant resources to addressing the needs of those experiencing homelessness:
  - The City has tripled the budget of Denver's Road Home -- the City's primary agency for coordination and funding of homeless shelters, case management and outreach -- over the last seven years. Those dollars have funded additional shelter capacity for men and women, rental assistance programs for people with special needs, job training, housing, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and case management.
  - Denver invests nearly \$50 million a year in resources that provide direct and indirect services to those experiencing homelessness in Denver and more than \$40 million in 2018 on affordable housing.
- Denver's Road Home has significantly improved outcomes for people experiencing homelessness:
  - Since 2011, more than 6,300 families and individuals experiencing homelessness in Denver were connected to permanent and supportive housing or more stable housing options.
- Denver's network of overnight shelters serves approximately 1,500 people a night.
- Denver has taken comprehensive action to address the causes and effects of homelessness through **innovative programs and initiatives** including:
  - **Social Impact Bonds:** This unique program finances evidence-based, data driven programs that connect chronically homeless individuals with supportive housing. Denver is currently providing 250 units of housing and intensive case management services for chronically homeless individuals who frequently use the city's emergency services, including police, jail, the courts and emergency rooms, with additional funding in 2018 for 100 additional units.
  - **Denver Day Works:** Beginning in late 2016, the City began a coordinated effort to recruit and engage those experiencing homelessness and connect them with employment. Year one outcomes include 110 individuals hired, with 15 finding positions at the City. Funding for this program has been expanded in 2018.
  - **Co-Responders:** Denver launched a pilot program that pairs licensed behavioral health clinicians with officers on patrol in April 2016. This program is being expanded in 2018 to cover all areas of the city. In the program's first year, 1537 individuals were connected to clinicians and 100% were given resources for services.

- **Denver Street Outreach Collaborative:** Denver’s Road Home funds 18 street outreach workers (along with 2 Behavioral Health Navigators and 2 Overnight Search & Rescue caseworkers) to connect with those experiencing homelessness and direct them to resources, including housing. An average of 713 unique individuals per month are referred to services and nearly 140 people living on the streets have been connected to housing. DPD also funds a Homeless Outreach Team of 4 officers who collaborate with street outreach workers and act as a liaison to the entire homeless community, including providers, to connect individuals with resources and work to avoid conflicts.
- **Storage Options:** In 2016, the City began providing additional funding to expand storage services offered by St. Francis Center so that people experiencing homelessness would have more options to safely store their belongings.
- **Mobile Restroom Access:** In 2016, the City launched a mobile restroom program to provide publicly accessible restrooms Downtown and on Capitol Hill, with potential program expansion and installation of permanent restrooms.
- **Outreach Court:** Held every other week at the Denver Rescue Mission, Outreach Court helps individuals experiencing homelessness take action on municipal level citations or warrants and provides direct access to mental health services and enrollment in Medicaid. Community service options are also available to complete court requirements. This specialty court is designed to meet homeless individuals in a safe and familiar location while reducing the amount of time required to resolve warrants and tickets. It served 724 individuals in 2017.
- **Tiny Homes Pilot:** After being approached by Beloved Community Village, the city worked with the villagers to develop standards that would pilot a site of 11 Tiny Homes. The City is currently examining potential code changes that would allow future Tiny Homes projects to exist more permanently in Denver.
- **Social Workers and Peer Navigators at the Library:** The City employs dedicated social workers and peer navigators – formerly homeless individuals with lived experiences – in our libraries, including the Downtown Central Library, to help connect vulnerable populations with essential services.
- **Lawrence Street Community Center:** Denver funded site acquisition and construction of the Lawrence Street Community Center, which provides access to showers, bathrooms, water fountains, meals and a safe space during the daytime hours. This facility in the Ballpark Neighborhood is serving an average of 860 people per day.
- **Dedicated Fund for Affordable Housing:** The city established Denver’s first dedicated Affordable Housing Fund in 2016. In 2018, we doubled the fund. It will now generate \$30 million per year and is expected to create or preserve 6,000 affordable homes over the next five years, with 40-50% of housing resource investments targeted to those experiencing homelessness and those earning below 30% of Area Median Income.
- **Shelter Quality/New Shelter Facilities:** The City funded two new shelters with service provider partners in 2017, and purchased a building that now operates as an overnight shelter. In 2018, Denver’s Road Home will begin implementing recommendations from a new three-year strategic plan to improve the quality of our shelter network and reduce common barriers to accessing shelter.

**New Coordinating Offices:** In the last two years, Denver has established two new offices – Office of Housing & Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE) and the Office of Behavioral Health Strategies – to better ensure coordination and unified policy among the city’s current activities around mental health and substance abuse issues, and the homeless to housing spectrum.

- **Project Homeless Connect:** This annual event allows over 1000 individuals experiencing homelessness to connect to essential services including medical care, employment, food, identification and even haircuts. 69 individuals gained a new job through the 2017 event 456 individuals were provided access to key documents like IDs, birth certificates and Social Security cards.
- Time, place and manner restrictions are used in every Colorado jurisdiction to protect the public space and to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all our residents. These laws address behavior and not status:
  - Some city laws that have the potential to impact individuals experiencing homelessness include explicit steps an officer must take (including evaluating need for medical or human services assistance and attempting to connect the individual with services) before a citation can be issued. This helps to ensure that arrest or citation is the *last possible resort*.
  - Training bulletins emphasize need for officers to attempt to direct those in need to appropriate services above all else.