

# Austin's Action Plan to End Homelessness

Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO)



**WORKING DOCUMENT**  
April 23, 2018



# Acknowledgments

Contributions to this plan were made by diverse stakeholders, including persons with lived experiences of homelessness, service providers, City of Austin and Travis County staff, elected officials, and members of the ECHO Membership Council, Housing Workgroup and CoC Workgroup.

## **Membership Council – General Members**

Kathie Tovo	Mayor Pro Tem, City of Austin (Chair)
Patrick Howard	Housing Authority of Travis County (Vice-Chair)
Chloe Pauwels	Austin Youth Collective
Lyric Wardlow	Austin Youth Collective
Isadora McKeon	Bunkhouse Group
Yvonne Camarena	CommUnity Care
Kathleen Casey	Integral Care
Jennifer Stephenson	Austin Police Department
Vella Karman	City of Austin, Austin Public Health
Josh Rudow	City of Austin, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development
Christy Moffett	Travis County, Health & Human Services
Todd Marvin	Eastern Seals
Erin Whelan	LifeWorks
Ann Teich	Austin Independent School District
Kimberly Weinberg	Veteran Affairs
Kelly White	SAFE Alliance
Greg McCormack	Front Steps
Kathleen Ridings	The Salvation Army
Lisa Garcia	Housing Authority of the City of Austin
Virginia Brown	Dell Medical School
David Houke	Austin Recovery
Toni Townsend	Foundation for the Homeless

## **Membership Council - Advisors**

Stephanie Hayden	City of Austin, Austin Public Health
Sherri Fleming	Travis County, Health & Human Services
Awais Azhar	HousingWorks
Thomas Visco	Glass House Policy
Kristan Arrona	Austin Apartment Association
Paul Caudero	Austin Apartment Association
Sandy Coe-Simmons	Central Health
Bill Price	Downtown Austin Alliance
Sara Cook	Community Care Collaborative
Mandy de Mayo	City of Austin, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development
Susan McDowell	LifeWorks

## **Housing and CoC Workgroup Chairs**

Dylan Shubitz	Housing Authority of the City of Austin
Chris Laguna	Integral Care
Stephanie Green	Caritas of Austin

# Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary .....	4
II. Development of this Action Plan.....	5
III. Data: Homelessness in Austin/Travis County .....	6
IV. Our Solution to Ending Homelessness.....	10
1. OUTREACH AND SHELTER .....	11
2. HOUSING & SUPPORT SERVICES .....	17
3. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES .....	23
4. SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS .....	29
5. COMMUNITY COMMITMENT .....	35
V. The Cost of Ending Homelessness.....	38
VI. Measuring Progress Towards Ending Homelessness .....	41
Glossary.....	42

# I. Executive Summary

In February 2017, Mayor Steve Adler and Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo partnered with the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) to convene a diverse group of representatives from local organizations to urgently address the crisis of homelessness in Austin, Texas. ECHO convened meetings with key stakeholders across the community and developed a plan. This document summarizes areas of investing that are innovative, impactful, and cost-saving solutions to expand the homelessness response system to ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring for adults, youth and families in our community.

---

**The Goal:** Launch a public-private partnership to build a sustainable system that ends people's homelessness in Austin, Travis County, Texas

**The Ask:** This plan calls for an expansion of resources to:

- 1) End homelessness for chronically homeless individuals & families,
- 2) Quickly re-connect people who become homeless with housing & support,
- 3) Prevent homelessness, and
- 4) Make homelessness rare, brief and a non-recurring experience.

---

This plan specifically outlines implementation of five elements that work *together* to end homelessness for individuals and families and make the community stronger for all. These components are 1) outreach services and shelters, 2) addressing disparities, 3) providing housing and support services, 4) strengthening our response system, and 5) building community commitment from both the public and private sectors.

Ending homelessness does not mean that no individuals and families will ever again experience homelessness. Instead, it means that we as a community have a systematic response that can address immediate needs, quickly connect people to housing and provide services to ensure long-term stability.

Our community is receiving national recognition for successfully implementing strategies that end homelessness. In August 2016, Austin was recognized for effectively ending veteran homelessness, ensuring we have a system that makes veteran homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. In January 2017, Austin was chosen by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as one of 13 communities nationwide to serve as a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program site to develop and implement a coordinated community plan to prevent and end youth homelessness by 2020. Also in January 2017, Austin received a national grant to expand permanent supportive housing through an innovative funding model called Pay for Success.

This Action Plan seeks to build on our success and mobilize public and private resources in the right order of magnitude overtime to address large unmet needs, to continue to implement strategies that work, think creatively, test new practices, and improve policies and programs. The action plan is meant to be a living document updated along the way to reflect learnings and evolving needs of our community. We hope it will adopted by City, County and others.

## II. Development of this Action Plan

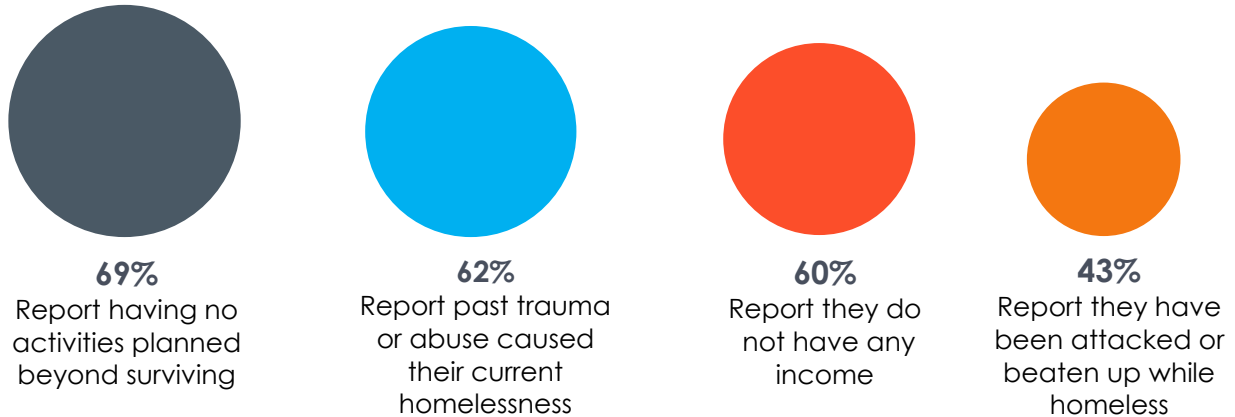
In February 2017, Mayor Steve Adler and Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo partnered with ECHO to convene stakeholders to come up with concrete strategies to end homelessness. ECHO convened several meetings in the spring of 2017 where over 50 different organizations - including City of Austin and Travis County departments - participated sharing their ideas. The following table summarizes the input process ECHO has facilitated during the development of this plan:

Date	Process	Participation
02/15/17	Stakeholders Input Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 28 participants</li> <li>- 20 different agencies represented</li> </ul>
02/22/17	Budget Input Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10 participants</li> <li>- 6 agencies represented</li> </ul>
02/24/17	Street Outreach & Shelter Input Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 17 participants</li> <li>- 13 agencies represented</li> </ul>
03/01/17	CoC Workgroup Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 17 participants</li> <li>- 13 agencies represented</li> </ul>
03/06/17	CoC Membership Council Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 22 participants</li> <li>- 15 agencies represented</li> </ul>
05/08/17 – 05/12/17	Working session with City of Austin Mayor's Office staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 9 participants</li> <li>- 6 agencies represented</li> </ul>
09/01/17	Published as a draft document on ECHO's website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not applicable</li> </ul>
12/22/17 – 01/22/18	Public Comment Period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Posted on ECHO website</li> <li>- Posted on CTOSH - community mailing list on homelessness</li> <li>- Directly emailed to 150 stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10 comments received</li> <li>- Comments document received from City of Austin Inter-Departmental Homelessness team</li> </ul>
01/23/18	Interviews with Austin Youth Collective members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 participants</li> </ul>
02/05/2018	Membership Council endorsed the plan to share with the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 30 participants</li> </ul>

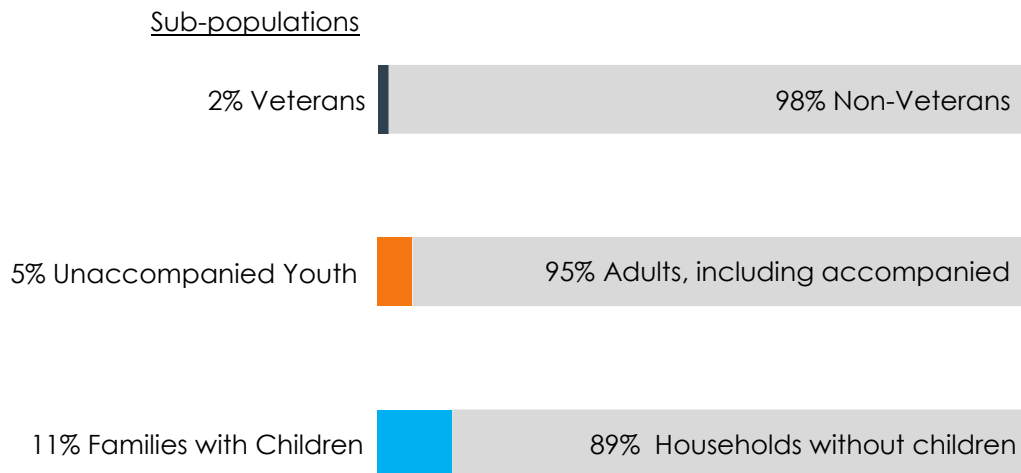
In addition to these meetings, ECHO sought and received feedback from the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH), and the United States Inter-Agency Council on Homelessness (USICH).

### III. Data: Homelessness in Austin/Travis County

#### 1. Persons who experience homelessness face many complex challenges<sup>1</sup>.



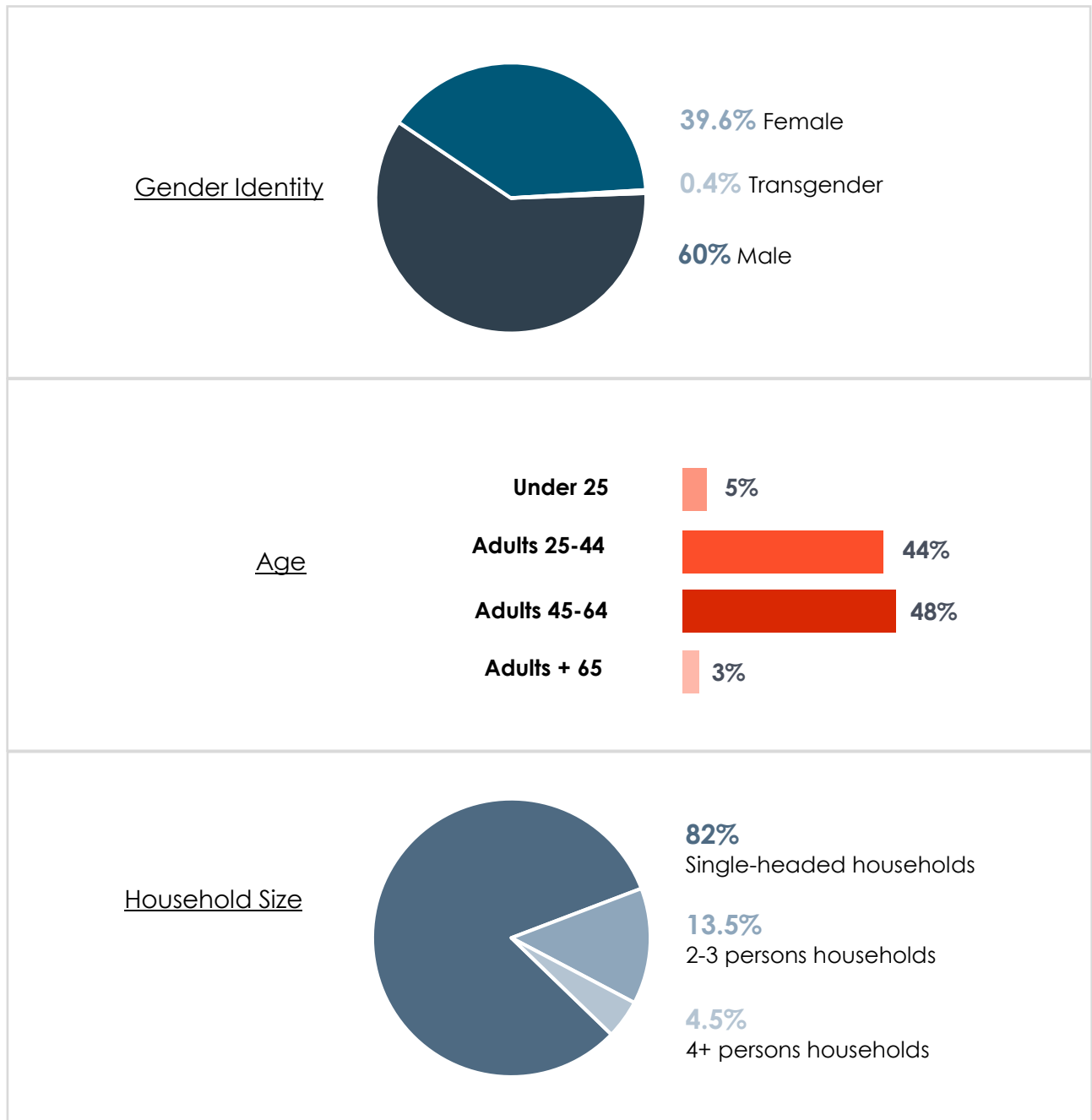
#### 2. Persons experiencing homelessness represent a diverse population<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO). Analysis of Coordinated Assessment Surveys of 4,717 Households. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), 29 Jan. 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

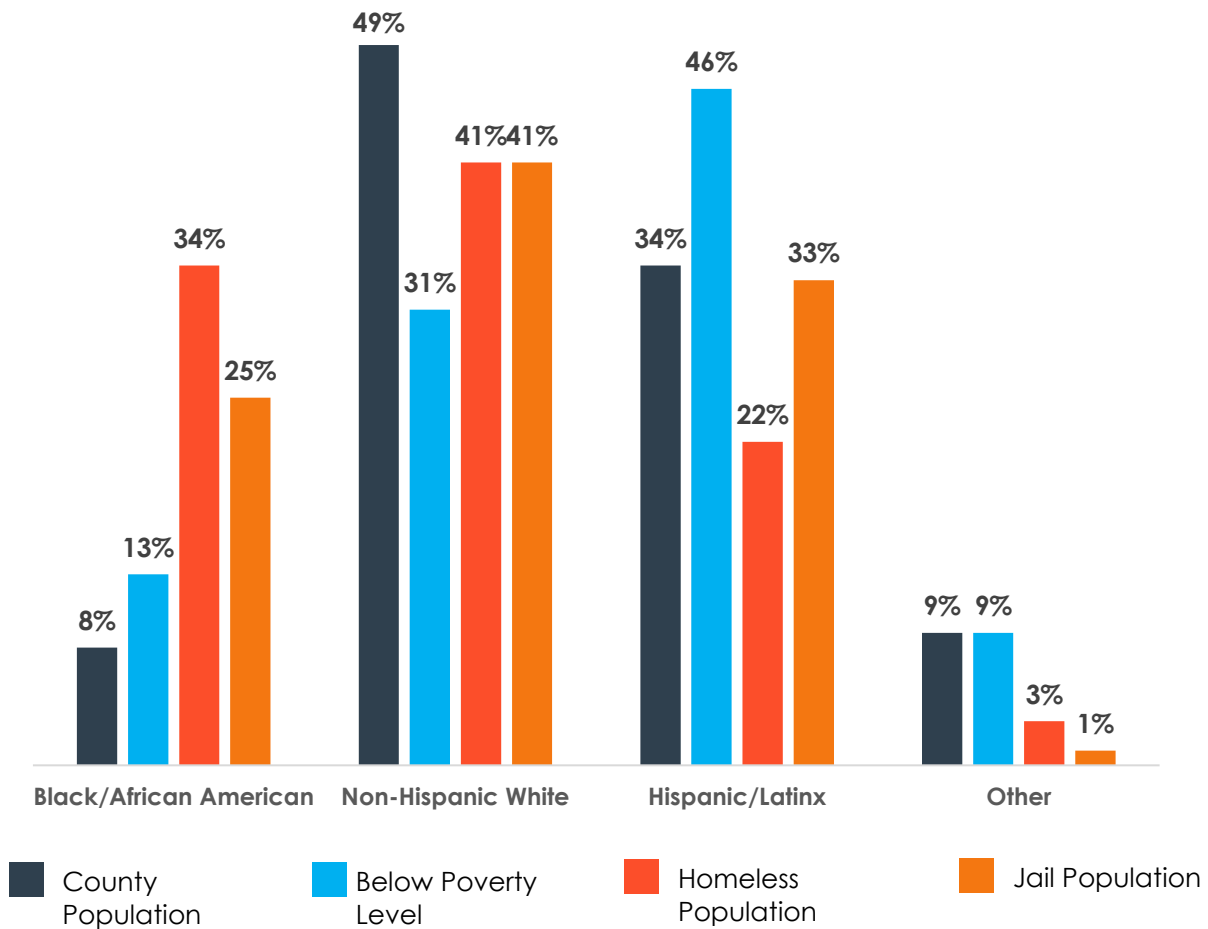
## 2. Persons experiencing homelessness represent a diverse population<sup>3</sup>.



<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

### 3. Black Americans face large disparities across systems<sup>4</sup>.

Black persons are incarcerated and experience poverty at significantly higher rates compared to their makeup in the general Travis County population and are disproportionately represented in the homeless population. They also receive longer sentences in jail for the same offenses with comparable criminal histories than their white counterparts.



<sup>4</sup> Sources:

- US Census Bureau. "Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months." 2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, S1701; US Census Bureau. "Hispanic of Latino Origin by Race." 2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B03002.
- Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO). Analysis of Coordinated Assessment Surveys of 4,717 Households. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), 29 Jan. 2018.
- Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO). Analysis of Travis County Sheriff's Office Booking Data for 2017. 30 Jan. 2018.
- Harris, Chris. (2017). Travis County Jail in 2015: Data Points to racism and longer confinement of African Americans. Retrieved from Grassroots Leadership website: <https://grassrootsleadership.org/sites/default/files/reports/racist-jailing-report.pdf>



#### 4. Homelessness is most visibly concentrated downtown<sup>5</sup>.

On January 28, 2017, 650 persons woke up homeless within ¼ mile of downtown homeless resources: 472 stayed in shelters & 178 stayed in the streets.



**650**

Total persons waking up homeless within ¼ mile of downtown homeless resources - 472 stay in shelters & 178 stay in the streets

● Homeless Services Centers ● Persons sleeping in the streets

---

<sup>5</sup> Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO). "2017 Point in Time Count." Jan. 2017.

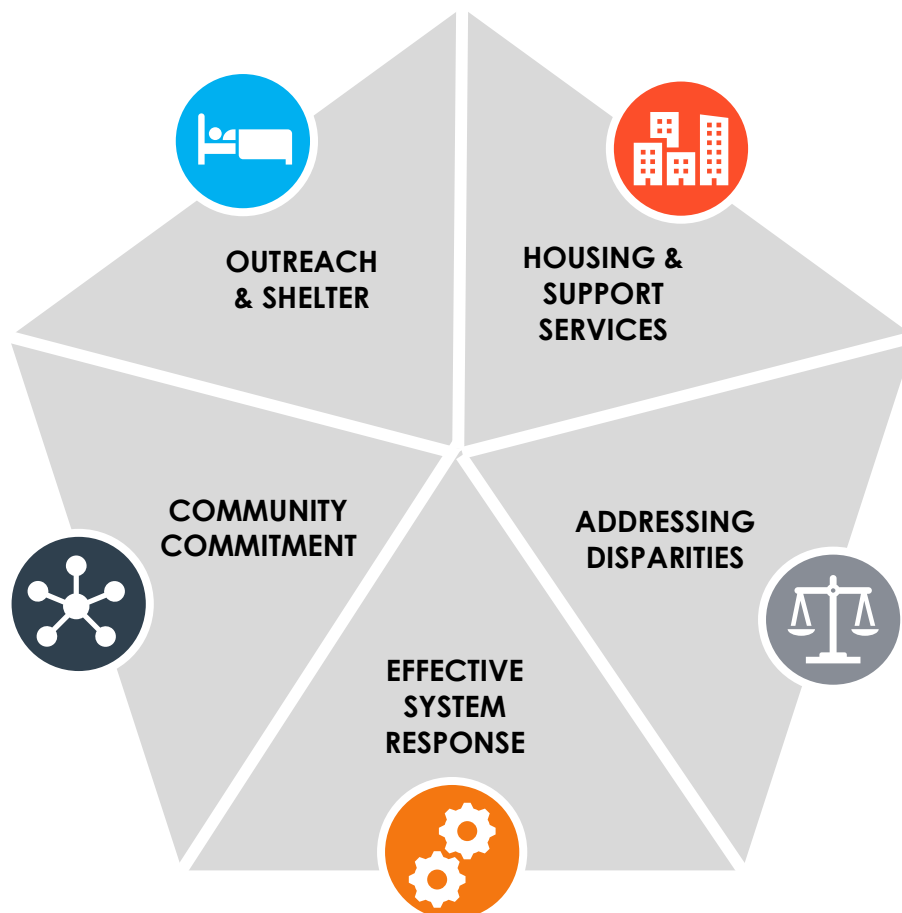
## IV. Our Solution to Ending Homelessness

Ending homelessness does not mean individuals and families will never again experience homelessness. Changing economic realities, the unpredictability of life, and unsafe or unwelcoming family environments may create situations where individuals or families could experience, re-experience or be at risk of homelessness. Instead, an end to homelessness means that we as a community have a systematic response that can address immediate needs, quickly connect people to housing and provide services to ensure long-term stability. It means that homelessness is a rare, brief and a non-recurring experience.

Every year over 7,000 people experience homelessness in Austin/Travis County. When so many of our neighbors are in crisis, the entire community of Austin suffers. People experiencing homelessness may have: a disability, fixed or no income, experienced domestic violence, a criminal history, or rental debt—making it extremely challenging to get back into housing without additional support. It has been proven that with support, people can access and maintain housing, improve their health and well-being and participate more fully in our community.

This plan calls for a community-wide approach to ending people's homelessness. It specifically outlines implementation of five elements that together will work to end homelessness, making our community stronger for all of us.

### System Components to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County





## 1. OUTREACH AND SHELTER

Street outreach and emergency shelters are the front line of our community's response to ending homelessness. These services help people meet basic daily survival needs like shelter, food, and personal hygiene while they wait for housing services. While these services are crucial for meeting people's immediate health and safety needs, they must be connected to an immediate plan for housing and services that focuses on ending their homelessness in the moment, and also ensuring long-term housing stability.

Austin's outreach and shelter programs currently face many challenges. As homelessness increases in the downtown core and in the surrounding rural and semi-rural areas, street outreach programs no longer have the capacity to contact and engage everyone experiencing homelessness across Travis County. High demand means that emergency shelters operate over maximum nightly capacity, resulting in broad policies like curfews and limited intake hours which can create barriers for people who would like to access their services. An overall lack of long-term housing services also increases the difficulty of meeting people's daily needs through these services, as these daily emergency programs find themselves serving some individuals for a much longer timeframe than originally intended. Without sufficient long-term housing services available, outreach and shelter services can only address the immediate and growing crisis needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.

To meet existing daily needs while also creating a pathway to reducing homelessness over the long term, this plan calls for concerted actions to address these competing issues. On the front end, it calls for more immediate emergency services, including additional small shelters and day services throughout the City and County as well as more outreach services to cover our entire geography, to ensure individuals' daily needs are met while more housing programs are created and implemented. On the back end, it calls for a significant increase in long-term housing programs and supports, so that these emergency programs can operate as accessible and efficient pathways to long-term housing services, as intended by their design.

The following table walks through each one of these major challenges and our proposed actions to address them.



## 1. OUTREACH AND SHELTER

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
Objective 1.1	Outreach programs engage all persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness and connect them to crisis services as well as to stable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mobile outreach teams engage some persons experiencing homelessness in some geographies of the city</li><li>• Mobile outreach efforts include<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Integral Care's PATH team</li><li>- The CoC Mobile Outreach team</li><li>- The Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST), a multi-disciplinary team of police officers, paramedics, social workers, and behavioral health specialists</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not enough outreach programs to contact and engage all unsheltered persons and connect them to crisis services and services that end their homelessness</li><li>• Lack of formal and systemic coordination among outreach teams</li></ul>	<p><b>More Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create more mobile outreach teams to cover and respond to all geographic areas within Travis County, ensuring complete and systematic coverage of all areas</li></ul> <p><b>More effective Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and implement guidelines standardizing effective practices for outreach workers across system</li><li>• Determine the role of the HOST team moving forward</li><li>• Enhance engagement strategies that outreach teams use with persons who are not interested in entering shelter or service agencies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All people experiencing unsheltered homelessness are identified and engaged</li><li>• People experiencing unsheltered homelessness are aware of community resources to address their needs</li><li>• Every person sleeping outside is given the option to create an individualized plan to return to stable housing</li></ul>



## 1. OUTREACH AND SHELTER

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
Objective 1.2	<p>Outreach and Shelter programs serve as platforms for people to access crisis services and housing</p> <p>All persons in unsheltered situations can access crisis services and can end their homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing a Coordinated Entry system - a shared community-wide intake process that matches all persons experiencing homelessness with the community resources that are best able to help them enter stable housing</li> <li>Engaging homelessness programs to work through the <i>Coordinated Entry</i> system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outreach &amp; shelters programs are not always able to focus on providing continuous pathways to permanent housing</li> <li>Some programs work in silos and don't coordinate with the <i>Coordinated Entry</i> system</li> <li>Shelters &amp; outreach programs don't have access to enough program funds to connect households to permanent housing</li> <li>Inflow to shelters that is bigger than the outflow to stable housing, resulting in low-turnover rate</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Outreach and Shelters as Platforms for Housing Access</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-orient outreach &amp; shelter services to focus on assisting households to rapidly exit into housing, better linking clients to housing options</li> <li>Increase rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing program funding and capacity so outreach &amp; shelter programs can connect people to stable housing</li> <li>Streamline referral flow between outreach shelters, housing programs and other homeless services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More people exit homelessness</li> <li>People experience fewer days homeless</li> </ul>



## 1. OUTREACH AND SHELTER

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
Objective 1.3	Persons throughout the City/County can access emergency shelter as desired and needed, including services to end their homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shelters often sleep more persons than they were originally designed to serve to meet large unmet need</li> <li>Tested pilot actions to reduce crowding outside the ARCH and increase public safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On a given day, there are 836 unsheltered individuals</li> <li>Not enough emergency shelter beds available to people who need it</li> <li>Some clients are turned away from emergency shelters because of lack of capacity, and others do not even try to get in</li> <li>Unsheltered homelessness is concentrated in the downtown core, causing public safety concerns and business complaints</li> </ul>	<p><b>More Shelter and Day Services throughout City/County</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locate additional smaller shelters and day services throughout City/County (Consider using publicly owned spaces or churches already engaged)</li> <li>Consider creating specific shelters to meet the specific needs of certain subpopulations, such as families, persons experiencing chronic homelessness, people needing respite services, persons currently using substance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People can access shelter options throughout the City/County</li> <li>Reduced pressure for all services downtown/</li> </ul>



## 1. OUTREACH AND SHELTER

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
Objective 1.4	Persons in unsheltered situations can meet their basic daily survival needs e.g. a comfortable and safe place to be during the day, including services to end their homelessness, access to showers and bathrooms during the day, access to 24-hour storage space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shelters may offer some of these resources during the day</li> <li>Drop-in centers like Trinity Center and Sunrise Church try to provide these services on a case-by-case basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shelters may have policies that make them high barrier (e.g. having a late entry and early exit, curfews, not allowing persons to bring their pets).</li> <li>There are not enough services for people to meet their survival needs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Low Barrier Day Services/Low-Barrier Shelters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shift model from sheltering people over night (with late entry and early exit) to a model that provides a place for someone to be 24/7 and provides a safe place for people to be during the day – <i>all while accessing services to quickly move on to stable housing</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More people better meet their survival needs</li> <li>More people exit homelessness</li> </ul>



## 1. OUTREACH AND SHELTER

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
<b>Objective 1.5</b>	Many persons experiencing homelessness may be able to return to family living situations or other permanent housing opportunities with minimal financial assistance or supportive mediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ECHO is implementing a diversion/family reunification program that diverts approximately 100 persons annually. This program helps clients identify and access alternate, safe housing arrangements outside of the homeless service system. For example, providing a bus ticket to reunify with family outside of Austin.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Diversion services are currently underfunded, and rely mostly on charitable contributions.</li><li>The community currently has no standardized training system on how to provide diversion counseling or services, meaning many potential reunifications go unrecognized and unrealized.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Integrate diversion training and services more broadly into the system, including shelters and outreach teams</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>More persons diverted from the homeless response system</li><li>More people exit homelessness</li></ul>





## 2. HOUSING & SUPPORT SERVICES

Austin's homeless services system primarily relies on two types of established, evidence-based housing programs—Rapid Re-housing and Permanent Supportive Housing. Both of these program types have been successfully implemented on limited scale at the local Austin/Travis County level as well as across the nation, and both have been proven to end homelessness long-term for households, including individuals and families, in need of housing.

Rapid Re-housing programs rely upon intensive but short-term rental assistance and housing case management services to connect households to sustainable, permanent housing as rapidly as possible. Once households have re-entered their own home, they are in a much better position to directly address the specific issues (such as a period of unemployment or an untreated medical condition) that led to their previous experience of homelessness. These programs also focus upon connecting households with longer-term needs to long-term community supports outside of the homeless services system, such as community support groups, education programs, and counseling services for survivors of domestic violence. Rapid re-Housing is considered an effective intervention for both individuals and families with children.

Permanent Supportive Housing programs combine long-term housing financial assistance with intensive and equally long-term housing case management and supportive services. Treatment and service plans are directed by the individual receiving assistance to target complex, long-term support needs such as mental or physical health concerns, addictions, or cognitive challenges. The services are targeted towards households with the most intensive support needs and longest history of homelessness, with the intention of helping these households stabilize their health and support systems while moving towards fully independent living at an individualized, self-directed pace. Permanent Supportive Housing programs have been proven to consistently result in long-term housing stability for individuals in the greatest need, while also drastically improving individual health and well-being. Just as with Rapid Re-housing, special attention is paid to connecting individuals to long-term supportive services outside of the homeless services system, such as health care, employment services, and community support groups.

This plan calls for a proportional increase in both Rapid Re-housing and Permanent Supportive Housing programs to meet documented local service need. The intention is to not only increase the overall housing assistance available to meet the demand for each type of service, but also to streamline the process by which individuals request and receive housing and supportive services from a variety of potential community service providers.

Austin's high occupancy and high cost rental market proves challenging when locating affordable, low barrier units for households supported to RRH and PSH. As any rental market tightens, the tenant screening criteria also tightens. We have seen success in leveraging various landlord incentives and mitigation tools to create housing opportunities. The community of providers working to end homelessness must remain committed to being competitive within the market of potential tenants



## 2. HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired outcomes
Objective 1.1	Community has enough resources to assist all persons in ending their homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with current system capacity to house as many people as possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not enough Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing program funds to serve all household experiencing homelessness</li> </ul>	<p><b>Bring RRH and PSH to Scale</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase resources to bring Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-housing program assistance to scale</li> <li>Increase funding for additional rental housing assistance and subsidies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More people exit homelessness and stay stably housed</li> </ul>
Objective 1.2	<p>Persons experiencing homelessness have <u>immediate access to existing</u> rental housing units that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable</li> <li>Low-barrier</li> <li>Geographically dispersed, including high opportunity areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using flexible funding to make market rate rental units more affordable</li> <li>Implementing a homeless preference with local Public Housing Authorities to dedicate Housing Choice Vouchers for persons experiencing homelessness</li> <li>Establishing homeless preferences with HUD-funded properties</li> <li>The <a href="#">Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint</a> identifies as a goal the production of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited supply of affordable and low-barrier rental housing units</li> <li>Increasing rents and high occupancy in the housing market</li> <li>Shortage of one-bedrooms and studios in the housing market</li> <li>Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties have been mostly inaccessible to the most vulnerable homeless individuals due to stringent credit and criminal background requirements</li> </ul>	<p><b>Create low-barrier, low-cost housing opportunities within current rental market</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase flexible funding to incentivize landlords to house persons exiting homelessness, and make units affordable and low-barrier</li> <li>Maximize partnerships with Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) so persons experiencing homelessness have access to project based vouchers and units in affordable properties, including PHA properties</li> <li>Encourage preferences in the awarding of Low Income Housing Tax Credits to increase investments for housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More affordable, low-barrier housing units available for persons experiencing homelessness</li> </ul>



## 2. HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired outcomes
		100 Permanent Supportive Housing units each year, 50 being Housing First		targeted to people experiencing homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with City and County to better align all eligible federal funding to address this effort</li> </ul>	
<b>Objective 1.3</b>	Community has enough housing units to meet <u>the future</u> needs of people experiencing homelessness. Units are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affordable</li> <li>- Low-barrier</li> <li>- Geographically dispersed, including high opportunity areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using bond funds to create 400 new housing opportunities for persons experiencing homelessness</li> <li>• Partnering with developers, encouraging them to invest in housing persons exiting homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected shortage of affordable rental units continues into the future given region's expected continued population growth</li> <li>• Many historically affordable units within the market are no longer affordable to due increased rent and others are being re-developed</li> </ul>	<p><b>Increase <u>future</u> availability of affordable, low-barrier housing units</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserving current affordable units within the market</li> <li>• Educate local public officials and developers on the need to dedicate affordable housing units to persons experiencing homelessness and on the effectiveness of the Housing First approach</li> <li>• Ensure CodeNEXT promotes the development of both affordable and low-barrier housing units throughout the City</li> <li>• Partner with relevant public entities to ensure all unused or underused land/ developments/ funding sources are capitalized for affordable housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More affordable, low-barrier housing units available for persons experiencing homelessness</li> </ul>



## 2. HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired outcomes
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce local opposition to affordable and low-barrier housing for persons experiencing homelessness by de-stigmatizing homelessness</li> <li>• Expand and diversify capacity to develop housing dedicated to ending homelessness</li> </ul>	
<b>Objective 1.4</b>	All persons who have exited homelessness can maintain housing stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landlord Outreach Specialists negotiate with landlords so persons are not evicted, and identify new housing opportunities to avoid returns to homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small subset of persons experiencing homelessness struggle to keep housing (e.g. because of using substances, unable to meet rent portion, or domestic violence)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicate Landlord Outreach Specialists to resolve housing conflicts and find new housing placements when necessary to avoid returns to homelessness</li> <li>• Create a better understanding of the eviction process by creating eviction prevention guidelines and increase case management and client knowledge of process</li> <li>• Develop a community understanding of maintaining landlord relationships through trainings, and staffing support</li> <li>• Increase meaningful community connections and a sense of purpose for the newly housed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer people return to homelessness</li> </ul>



## 2. HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired outcomes
<b>Objective 1.5</b>	Persons experiencing homelessness have access to recovery services, mental healthcare, and other healthcare services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing access to healthcare, substance use treatments, and behavioral health treatments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persons experiencing homelessness often use substances, have limited access to healthcare, and have mental health challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase availability of mental health services</li> <li>Expand detox services, residential/after care treatment, Intensive Outpatient Treatment, Medical Assisted Treatment, and community-based wraparound supports by Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselors</li> <li>Increase peer support specialists in the community to improve client navigation into systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More people access mental health services</li> <li>More people access more primary healthcare and less emergency healthcare</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 1.6</b>	Persons experiencing homelessness access all mainstream benefits and are assisted by social service agencies to successfully enroll in benefit programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applying to grants to increase community capacity to assist clients' application for benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persons experiencing homelessness are often eligible for benefits, but are not enrolled to receive them (example include TANF, SNAP, SSI, SSDI and benefits)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the number of "benefits" case managers who work with clients to complete applications for social security income and disability income (e.g. SOAR)</li> <li>Advocate to expand benefit programs investigate streamlining benefits coordination within the coordinated entry system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More people enroll in mainstream benefits</li> <li>More people have increased incomes</li> </ul>



## 2. HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired outcomes
Objective 1.7	Increase access to meaningful and sustainable employment for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinating employment programs with homeless assistance programs via the <i>Employment and Income Workgroup</i>, a collective of 9 agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unemployment, under-employment, and low wage employment are frequent causes of homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance the work of the <i>Employment and Income Workgroup</i> by enhancing referral pathways from homeless assistance programs to employment programs, increasing its network of participating programs, and tracking outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased connections to employment</li> <li>Increased income for clients</li> </ul>



### 3. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES

National research indicates race, gender, veteran status and sexual orientation influences people's pathway into and out of homelessness.<sup>6</sup> Although homelessness is a crisis for all people who experience it, it can be much harder for individuals further marginalized by racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other form of discrimination. One of our goals is to better understand and address the root causes that place subgroups at higher risks of homelessness, and address the specific individual and system barriers they face to exit homelessness.

#### *Pathways into Homelessness*

Since the 1980s, Black Americans have been overrepresented among the U.S. homeless population, comprising roughly 40.4 percent of the total U.S. homeless population, but only 12.5 percent of the overall population. Our local data shows similar statistics. Black persons comprise 34 percent of the Travis County homeless population, but only 8 percent of the overall county population. Higher rates of homelessness among people who are Black seems to mirror racial disparities documented in other areas, including disparities in housing, employment, education, criminal justice and child welfare.

LGBTQ youth also experience homelessness in greater numbers. Consistent with the notion that non-heterosexual youth are overrepresented in the population of youth experiencing homelessness in the U.S., approximately 23%<sup>7</sup> of homeless youth in Austin identify as LGBTQA, more than triple the number of LGBTQA youth in the general population<sup>8</sup>.

#### *Pathways out of Homelessness*

Our homelessness response system and the policies and programs that comprise it, must take into account elevated risks of homelessness among certain subgroups. For example, Black persons also are disproportionately incarcerated and end up facing more housing-related barriers due to criminal histories.

Landlords or property management companies often use stringent screening criteria, even in cases when criminal charges pose no risk to property nor does it affect a person's ability to pay rent. Our goal is to increase housing opportunities regardless of barriers by strategically partnering with landlords. This plan calls for actions to address disparities among sub-populations experiencing homelessness and for addressing barriers to housing at the individual level and at the system level.

---

<sup>6</sup> July 19, 2016. Dr. Moser Jones Explores Race, Discrimination and Homelessness Connections <https://sph.umd.edu/news-item/dr-moser-jones-explores-race-discrimination-and-homelessness-connections>

<sup>7</sup> Voices of Youth Count (2017). Travis County, Texas: Report on Youth Homelessness. Findings from the youth count, brief youth surveys & provider. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall.

<sup>8</sup> January 11, 2017. U.S., More Adults Identifying as LGBT. [http://news.gallup.com/poll/201731/lgbt-identificationrises.aspx?g\\_source=Social%20Issues&g\\_medium=newsfeed&g\\_campaign=tiles](http://news.gallup.com/poll/201731/lgbt-identificationrises.aspx?g_source=Social%20Issues&g_medium=newsfeed&g_campaign=tiles)



### 3. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
Objective 3.1	<p><b>Pathways out of Homelessness</b> Our homeless response system acknowledges and addresses disproportionate barriers to exiting homelessness and access to housing among sub-groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving access to housing opportunities for persons with criminal backgrounds by educating landlords and negotiating lower criminal screening barriers</li> <li>Starting to analyze program outcomes by racial and ethnic groups to identify any outcome disparities</li> <li>Designing a Pay for Success initiative to house 250 persons in need of permanent supportive housing who are frequent users of shelters, the criminal justice system, and/or the emergency medical system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the early stages of understanding disparate outcomes within subpopulations</li> <li>Limited understanding of disenfranchised populations in our community</li> </ul>	<p><b>Addressing barriers to exiting homelessness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the Pay for Success initiative with a target population of frequent users of criminal justice and emergency healthcare systems</li> <li>Ensure the homelessness system &amp; programs consistently evaluate service data to ensure all sub-populations are reached, and outcomes are equitably achieved by everyone</li> <li>Better tailor outreach, staff recruitment or development, and service delivery models to address subpopulations' specific barriers (e.g. conducting affirmative marketing, training on cultural competency, providing safe and inclusive services, changing program, policies &amp; practices to address barriers)</li> <li>Create new partnerships with stakeholders already working to address racial disparities (e.g. City of Austin Equity Office)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing stability is equitably achieved by all sub-populations</li> <li>Emergency response system is comprised of policies and practices the promote equity</li> </ul>





### 3. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
<b>Objective 3.2</b>	<p>Our homeless response system addresses individual and system barriers to exiting homelessness.</p> <p>All persons experiencing homelessness are connected to housing regardless of their criminal, debt, or rental background</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnering with private landlords and property management companies to make units low-barrier by reducing criteria that screens people out</li> <li>Using flexible funding to provide incentives to landlords to mitigate perceived risks of housing persons exiting homelessness</li> <li>Working with the Austin Apartment Association and Austin/Travis County Re-Entry Round Table project to standardize a low-barrier tenant screening criteria industry wide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persons experiencing homelessness often have housing barriers, including a criminal record, negative rental history, and/or debt, that increase their length of homelessness</li> <li>Persons experiencing homelessness are ticketed, arrested and jailed under the "no sit, no lie", no camping, and panhandling local ordinances – but without services – they cannot end their homelessness and continue to cycle in and out of jails - taxing public safety departments</li> </ul>	<p><b>Addressing Individual and System Barriers to Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire additional landlord outreach specialist with real-state expertise who can efficiently find housing and can negotiate lower screening criteria for persons experiencing homelessness</li> <li>Increase current network of Landlord Outreach Specialists who collaboratively maximize housing opportunities</li> <li>Standardize a low-barrier tenant screening criteria industry wide for affordable housing units</li> <li>Increase implementation of Housing First principles system wide to reduce barriers to housing among subpopulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More persons – regardless of their barriers to housing - exit homelessness</li> <li>Housing barriers for each person are addressed individually and at the system level</li> <li>Increase the stock of low-barrier affordable housing units</li> </ul>



### 3. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
Objective 3.3	<p><b>Pathways into Homelessness</b></p> <p>System works to understand and address root causes that place subgroups at higher risks of homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starting to analyze risk factors that place subgroups at higher risks of homelessness (e.g. foster care placement, incarceration)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the early stages of understanding systemic root causes of homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze root causes that place subgroups at higher risks of homelessness</li> <li>Address root causes through broader system coordination with the criminal justice, housing, foster care, CPS systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding pipeline into homelessness from different systems to build safety nets</li> </ul>



### 3. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
<b>Objective 3.4</b>	<p>Our homelessness response system leverages the abilities and agency of people that have experienced homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with youth with lived experiences of homelessness (Austin Youth Collective) to implement plan to prevent &amp; end youth homelessness</li> <li>Hiring staff with lived experiences of homelessness by some service provider</li> <li>Dedicating voting seats for persons with lived experience of homelessness in the CoC decision-making body (Membership Council) including two members of the Austin Youth Collective to End Homelessness</li> </ul> <p>All HUD CoC-funded organizations have a min. of 1 seat on Board of Directors for a person with lived</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of widespread representation from persons with lived experiences of homelessness in the design and implementation of policies and programs to reduce homelessness</li> </ul>	<p><b>Leveraging People’s Agency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistently include more persons with lived experiences of homelessness in <u>all</u> decision-making bodies</li> <li>Incorporate expertise from persons experiencing homelessness in development and management of programs</li> <li>Improve staff diversity across the homeless response system, including leadership roles, to reflect the population being served</li> <li>Provide leadership and training for programs to hire persons with lived experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persons with lived experiences of homelessness are an integral part of program design, service delivery and system policies</li> <li>Homeless response system, including leaderships represents population being served</li> </ul>



### 3. ADDRESSING DISPARITIES

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
		<p>experience of homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The City of Austin innovation team has formed an advisory council of persons with lived experiences that is informing their work in re-designing shelter services at the Austin Homeless Resource Center (ARCH)</li> </ul>			
<b>Objective 3.5</b>	The Homelessness Response System affirmatively furthers fair housing prioritizing client housing choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing more housing choices in geographically dispersed areas and in high-opportunity areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing located in neighborhoods with no poverty concentration may lead to social isolation or increased costs of services &amp; lack of public transportation that may offset housing gains</li> <li>Housing located in neighborhoods with no poverty concentration may be too costly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to implement Housing First principles, where client has choice in location and type of housing</li> <li>Create affordable housing opportunities all over the city.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse housing portfolio to meet client's choice</li> </ul>



## 4. SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS

A successful approach to ending homelessness requires systematic coordination that is client centered, provider informed, data driven and funder led. Said another way, to maximize the use of all resources effectively, it requires 1) sharing a vision of connecting people to housing and providing services to maintain housing, 2) having clear goals and measuring progress to achieve targets, 3) a recognition by each program and stakeholder of the role they play in ending homelessness, and 4) accountability from all involved.

In Austin, we can identify all the components of an effective system – but we need this plan to bring them together and to scale to become truly effective. ECHO's vision is a community fiercely dedicated to ending homelessness. This action plan infuses that fierce commitment across multiple sectors and instills a shared vision of addressing people's immediate needs, quickly connecting people to housing and providing services to ensure long-term stability. It lays out desired outcomes for each system element and spells out specific ways of measuring progress, using the Homeless Management Information System as a shared and open database. Through ongoing partnerships, we continue to define the role each of us plays in ending homelessness and invite others to join the efforts.

ECHO is committed to building this system to scale and growing the public private partnerships necessary to do so. Patterned after ECHO's leadership role with HUD Continuum of Care, Emergency Solution Grants and Homeless Management Information System, ECHO offers the community a strong voice for systemic change with characteristics of a backbone organization, an umbrella, and a quarterback.



#### 4. System Effectiveness

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
Objective 4.1	All programs and agencies work together efficiently, contributing to the overall goal of reducing homelessness in Travis County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Streamlining existing processes across agencies and programs</li> <li>Increasing cross-system partnerships (e.g. schools, criminal justice, health care) through initiatives like the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness and Pay for Success</li> <li>Using outcome data to inform system and program change, tracking system progress and evaluate impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a coordinated homelessness response system where all programs and agencies align, requires dedication of resources that are currently limited, restricting level of necessary coordination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue streamlining existing processes across agencies and programs</li> <li>Strengthen cross-system partnerships through formalized agreements, shared investments, and dedicated system-level staff</li> <li>Invest in training and staff development to ensure high quality services are provided across all programs and to ensure continuity as well as all having the tools they need to do their jobs.</li> <li>Increase alignment and impact of current funding through consistent contract requirements and performance management</li> <li>Use more qualitative feedback from clients to inform change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved coordination and collaboration</li> </ul>



#### 4. System Effectiveness

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
<b>Objective 4.2</b>	<p>All programs across the system perform well, achieving performance benchmarks and contributing to the overall goal of reducing homelessness. Any programs struggling to meet performance benchmarks develop a reasonable plan to improve. Should they fail to improve, alternate service providers are sought</p>	<p>Understanding each program's performance and contribution to the overall goal of reducing homelessness in Travis County and its cost-effectiveness</p> <p>Developing a shared, community-wide understanding of programs and services</p> <p>Monitoring system performance through quarterly reports and system performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistency in achieving client outcomes by programs and agencies, with limited resources available to assist programs and ensure outcomes are met</li> <li>• Outcome data shows some programs are high performers while others need improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the extent to which program models are implemented successfully</li> <li>• Increase funding towards trainings, technical assistance services, and community dialogues to improve capacity of providers</li> <li>• Increase use of performance-based contracts that tie contract outcomes to community-wide goals</li> <li>• Improve the capacity of the CoC and funders to monitor program performance and assess cost effectiveness</li> <li>• Increase use of competitive funding</li> <li>• Align investments to cost-effective efforts that end homelessness</li> <li>• Shift funding towards high performing interventions and programs, recognizing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs continuously improve performance as evidenced by CoC performance measures</li> </ul>



#### 4. System Effectiveness

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
				subpopulations' needs and barriers	
<b>Objective 4.3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff working to end homelessness have all the tools to succeed in their jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a shared understanding of effective program practices, including client to case manager ratios</li> <li>Providing training on different topics to support staff and programs (e.g. Motivational Interviewing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance among staff working to end homelessness varies</li> <li>Burn-out and high turnover rates among front-line staff working to end homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure staff compensation reflects experience and expected outcomes</li> <li>Staff programs have caseloads based on best practices to prevent staff burnout</li> <li>The system (programs, agencies, actors) promotes office cultures that support self-care among staff to prevent burnout (e.g. staff workshops, counseling)</li> <li>Increase training opportunities for staff to improve performance</li> <li>Programs consider all tools available to incentivize staff (e.g. recognition, competitive salaries, bonuses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced system staff turnover rates</li> </ul>





#### 4. System Effectiveness

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
<b>Objective 4.4</b>	Prevention programs target resources to households that would become homeless if assistance would not be provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding current research on how to target prevention efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevention programs may be targeted too broadly, assisting low-income households but not necessarily those who would become homeless without the assistance provided</li> <li>Prevention programs often take too long to assist families (e.g. it takes too long to process eligibility paperwork and make payment to landlords) and as a result, families may end up losing their permanent home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support research on effective homelessness prevention strategies, and re-orient current prevention programs to support those effective practices. Capture prevention data and root causes of homelessness and their weight.</li> <li>Increase staff and resources to prevent discharge into homelessness from correctional facilities, hospitals, and mental health and foster care systems</li> <li>Ensure formerly homeless households maintain housing stability through supportive services, preventing returns to homelessness</li> <li>Ensure effectiveness of prevention programs, reducing the time it takes to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More persons are prevented from experiencing homelessness</li> <li>Fewer persons experience homelessness for the first time</li> <li>Reduced returns to homelessness</li> </ul>



#### 4. System Effectiveness

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
				provide assistance to eligible clients	
<b>Objective 4.5</b>	Persons in Transitional Housing rapidly exit into permanent housing within 6 months Persons who could be successful in Rapid Re-housing programs are served by those programs instead of Transitional Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-orienting transitional housing investments not targeted towards the preferred sub-populations towards a rapid re-housing model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transitional Housing is the preferred intervention for programs that serve persons escaping domestic violence, youth and persons who are in recovery and want sober living, but it is a costly route to helping other populations into permanent housing when more cost-effective solutions are available, such as rapid re-housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue re-orienting transitional housing investments towards a Rapid Re-housing model</li> <li>Provide technical assistance to existing Transitional Housing programs to improve efficiency of service delivery and reduce time spent and cost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transitional housing focuses on preferred subpopulations</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 4.6</b>	Our community has a response system that makes homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing <a href="#">Austin/Travis County Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More funds beyond those awarded by the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) are needed to implement plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise funds to implement Austin/Travis County Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reach functional zero for youth</li> </ul>



## 5. COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

This plan calls for investments in the right order of magnitude to end homelessness at an appropriate scale over time and seeks engagement from many sectors towards that end. A big part of community commitment starts with building empathy and understanding of what is like to be homeless in Austin. A lot of work needs to be done to address discrimination and stigma that exist in our community against people experiencing homelessness. We invite everyone in our community to become fiercely committed to ending homelessness and play a role in creating a systemic and empathetic community wide response to do so.

**Government** – it is crucial for elected officials and staff within the City of Austin and Travis County to be committed to understanding the scope of homelessness and implementing comprehensive and systemic solutions. State and federal partners provide access to resources, best practices, and peers across the country.

**Community members** – Neighbors including persons experiencing homelessness are an integral part of creating solutions to homelessness based on their unique experiences. We welcome volunteers and donations from community residents and creating ways for persons with lived experiences to inform and lead our work.

**Nonprofits** – Caritas of Austin, The Salvation Army, Front Steps, Integral Care, Safe Alliance and LifeWorks, among many others nonprofits providing direct assistance to persons experiencing homelessness, are crucial in connecting people back to housing and the community at large. This plan is reflective of the collective vision of service providers and provides opportunities for expanding programs and continuous learning.

**Faith community** – Individual congregations are demonstrating the impact they can have through direct services, advocacy and grassroots organizing. We invite them to grow their impact, understanding how their work is part of the larger community wide system of ending homelessness.

**Foundations** – our local philanthropic community, including large and small foundations, have provided catalytic funding, leadership and vision. This plan provides an opportunity for investment and ongoing community leadership and vision for local and national foundations.

**Business** - the private sector continues to play an integral part in the solution of ending homelessness. Landlords and property management companies provide access to low-barrier housing to persons experiencing homelessness. The Downtown Austin Alliance continues to provide vision and investment in the work to end homelessness. Employers play a crucial role in providing jobs to persons experiencing homelessness. We welcome their continued engagement and investments in the future.

**Other Institutions** - hospitals, community health centers, behavioral health centers, the criminal justice system and the foster care system are all critical entry points for persons experiencing homelessness. We invite these different sectors to continue collaborating and coordinating services and discharge planning.



## 5. Community Commitment

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
Objective 5.1	Our community invests in the right order of magnitude to end homelessness at an appropriate scale over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City and County dedicate general revenue to homeless programs</li><li>• St. David's Foundation now includes support services for housing programs in their investments</li><li>• Mobile Loaves and Fishes has introduced faith community to creative housing solutions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local investment is inadequate to meet the need</li><li>• City, County and Philanthropic community lack a shared vision for moving the needle</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a dedicated local funding stream to meet the large unmet need at appropriate scale</li><li>• Expand the base of support across sectors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Larger investments to meet large unmet need</li></ul>

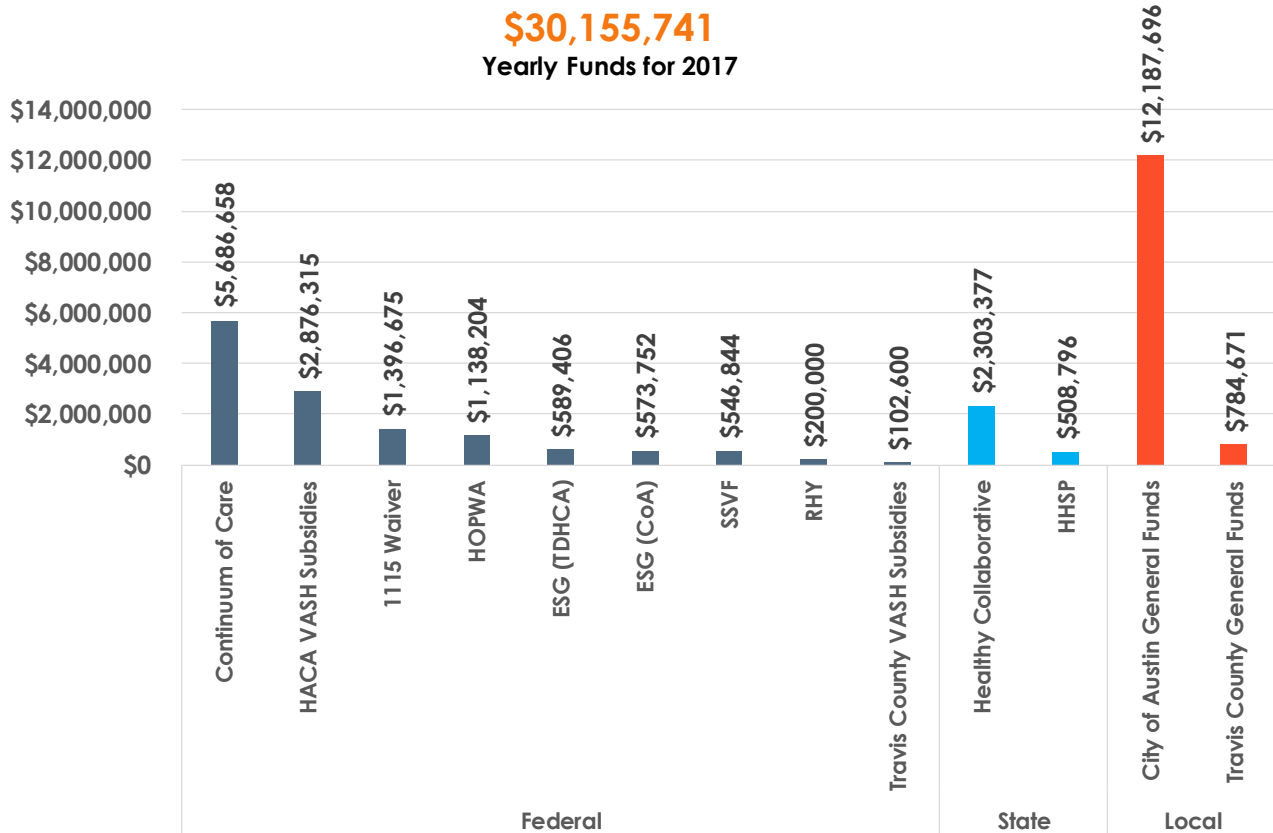


## 5. Community Commitment

#	Vision	Current Strategies	Current Challenges	Proposed Actions	Desired Outcomes
<b>Objective 5.2</b>	<p>Community members are aware of how to effectively contribute both in-kind and financially to ending people's homelessness</p> <p>More people involved through their work, faith communities and neighborhoods in ending community homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rely on individual agencies to advertise their programs</li> <li>• Rely on media coverage to inform public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Untapped resources needed to support sustainable messaging about community efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an options menu for the public to be involved in the solutions</li> <li>• Create an electronic platform for volunteers to support the work of ending homelessness - across systems</li> <li>• Create a communication strategy that encourages people to give to food and service organizations for the homeless, rather directly to panhandlers or others experiencing homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased community involvement in strategic ways to contribute to ending homelessness</li> </ul>

## V. The Cost of Ending Homelessness

In collaboration with service providers and stakeholders, ECHO developed a model that calculates the additional costs of achieving functional zero<sup>9</sup> in Austin/Travis County beyond the estimated \$30 million in current annual investments from local, state and federal entities. This figure was created by analyzing local, state, and federal public documents detailing program funding for fiscal year 2017. The following graph breaks down the amount by funder.



This model projects service needs and associated costs beyond current system capacity based on available data on Austin's homeless population in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database. The cost estimates in this model were developed in collaboration with service providers within the Continuum of Care.

Current housing need is calculated based on all persons who have completed Coordinated Assessment (CA) in the past year, are experiencing homelessness, were assessed as needing a housing intervention, and have not been housed. Note that the number of people assessed as needing a housing intervention is lower than the total number of people who interact with

<sup>9</sup> Functional zero means that at any time, the number of persons experiencing homelessness is no greater than the average number of persons returning to housing – anyone who becomes homeless during a given time period is rehoused within the same time period.

the homeless services system overall – many people who experience homelessness resolve their homelessness without a housing intervention.

Based on CA data, the model assumes approximately 70 percent of households experiencing homelessness need a Rapid Re-housing (RRH) intervention, with the remaining 30 percent in need of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).

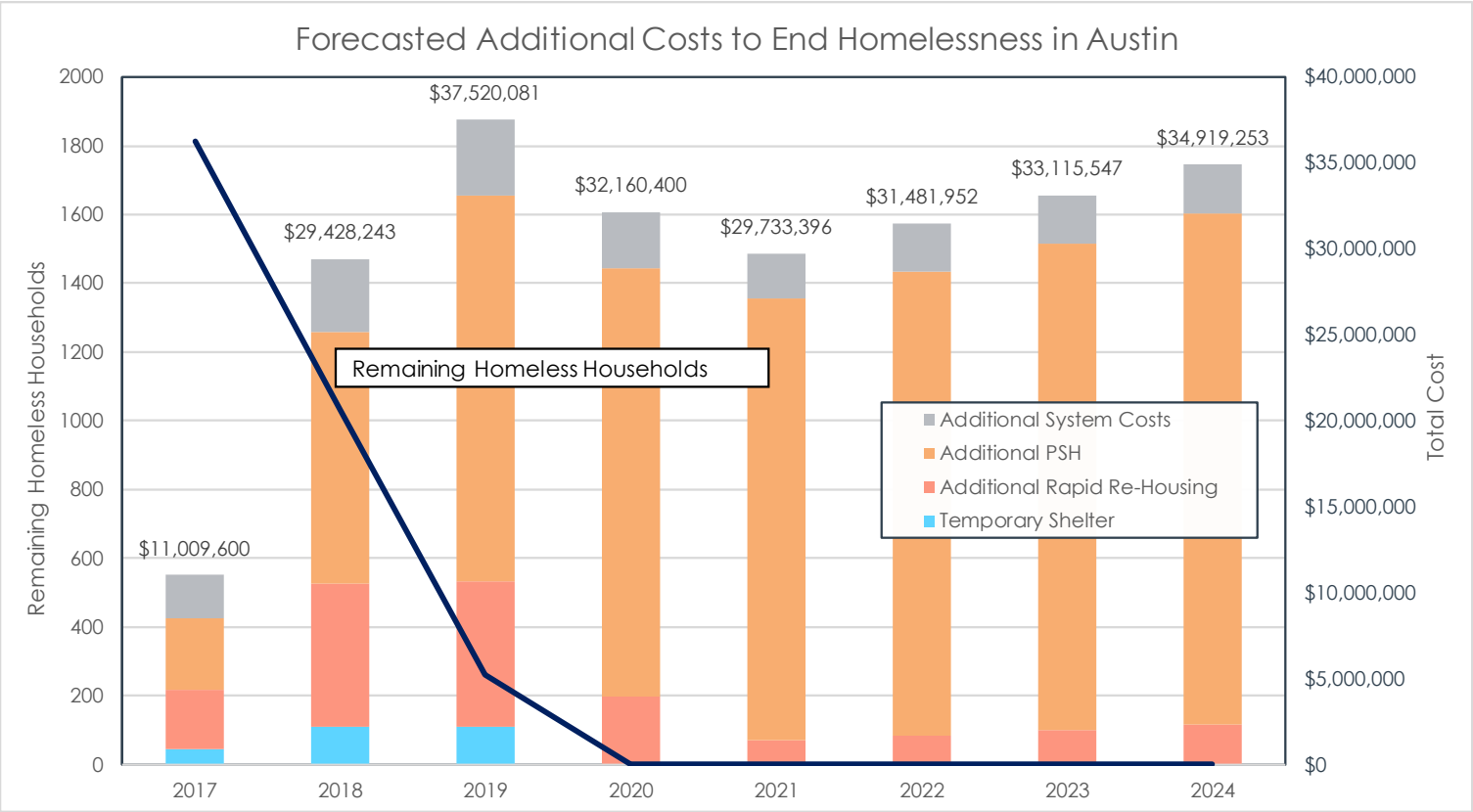
For households in RRH programs, the model assumes that direct rent and utility assistance will be provided at 100 percent for an average of four months. Case management services will be available for a total of six months. For households in PSH programs, the model assumes a year to year turnover rate of six percent.

Below is an overview of the types of costs included in the projection model and examples of the average per unit costs used. As described in other sections of this plan, investments in each and all of the five system elements are necessary to effectively end homelessness in our community.

<b>System Need</b>	<b>Average Estimated Unit Cost</b>
<b>1. Outreach &amp; Shelter</b>	
Temporary Shelter Site	\$7,500 per month for rent, utilities, portable toilets, shelters, food
Respite Beds	\$15,000 per bed per year
Outreach & Shelter Staff	\$65,000 per staff, includes fringe benefits
Capacity Building Training	\$300 per training per person
Program Indirect Costs	20% per year
<b>2. Addressing Disparities</b>	
Equity Coordinator/Other Staff	\$65,000 - \$75,000 per staff, includes fringe benefits
<b>3. Housing &amp; Support Services</b> <i>(Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing)</i>	
Rent + Utility Assistance	\$1,332 per month, 3% rent growth rate, 4 months avg. for RRH
Moving and Furniture	\$800 per household
Utility Deposit	\$200 per household
Rental Credit Repair	50% of clients - \$2,000 per household
Bus Passes	\$41.25 per month for 6 months
Misc. Housing Support	50% of clients - \$200 per household (e.g. child care, car repairs)
Risk Mitigation	70% of households - \$2,751 per household
Buydowns	25% of households - \$2,742 per household
Substance Use Treatments	E.g. \$10,000 per detox, \$6,000 per Intensive Outpatient Treatment
Program Staff	\$65,000-\$75,000 per staff, includes fringe benefits
Capacity Building Training	\$300 per training per person
Program Indirect Costs	20% per year
<b>4. Effective System</b>	
System Coordination	\$65,000 or \$75,000 per staff, includes fringe benefits - (includes prevention, employment and other coordinators)
<b>5. Community Commitment</b>	
Engagement & Fund-Raising	65,000 or \$75,000 per staff, includes fringe benefits - (includes fund-raising or public engagement coordinators)

# Projected Additional Cost to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County

The following scenario is built using a projection model that allows our community to determine the impact of various levels of additional funding – beyond the current \$30M of yearly local, state and federal investments. In the following projected scenario, additional increased investments ranging between \$29M in 2018 to \$38M in 2019, would allow Austin to reach functional zero in 2020 and would require additional investments between \$30-35 million for the years thereafter to maintain it.





## VI. Measuring Progress Towards Ending Homelessness

We are using the following System Performance Measures as adopted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to measure progress in ending homelessness in Austin/Travis County. Changes in green represent desired improvements while those in red represent undesired changes.

#	Measure	Goal	Change	Percentage Change
A	Total Experiencing Homelessness	Reduce the total number of people experiencing homelessness in Travis County per the annual point in time count	<p>Point in Time Count</p> <p>■ FY 2017 ■ FY 2016</p>	✓ 4.7% decrease
B	Length of Time People Remain Homeless	Reduce the average length of time people remain homeless from the time people seek services	<p>Days</p> <p>■ FY 2016 ■ FY 2015</p>	6.7% increase
C	Returns to Homelessness	Reduce the percent of persons who return to homelessness in 2 years	<p>Returns</p> <p>■ FY 2016 ■ FY 2015</p>	✓ 12% decrease
D	Number of Newly Homeless	Reduce the number of persons who become homeless for the first time	<p>Newly Homeless</p> <p>■ FY 2016 ■ FY 2015</p>	1.2% increase
E	Successful Housing Placements	Increase the number of persons with successful exits and/or retention in permanent supportive housing programs	<p>Exits/Retention</p> <p>■ FY 2016 ■ FY 2015</p>	No change
F	Income growth	Increase the percent of adults served who increased their income	<p>Adults with...</p> <p>■ FY 2016 ■ FY 2015</p>	No change

Note: FY2016 = September 2015 – August 2016 and FY2015 = September 2014 – August 2015.

# Glossary

**100 Day Youth Challenge** an initiative sponsored by A Way Home America in 2016 in which three cities, Austin, Cleveland, and Los Angeles, set goals to address youth homelessness in their respective communities, and worked towards those goals within 100 days.

**Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)** a regulation under HUD that requires communities to evaluate their housing patterns and look for racial bias, as outlined under the Fair Housing Act.

**Affordable Housing** is housing where the tenant can maintain their monthly rent either independently or through program assistance or subsidies.

**Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH)** a resource center located in downtown Austin that assesses client needs, informs people on how and where to access services, provides a Day Resource Center, and provides sleeping areas for men experiencing homelessness.

**Case Manager (CM)** provides assessment and coordination services. Uses knowledge of available services and housing to help families move through crisis towards stability.

**Chronically Homeless** include any person with a disability who has been living in a place not meant for human habitation for the last 12 months continuously or on at least four occasions in the last three years where those occasions cumulatively total at least 12 months.

**CodeNEXT** is the City of Austin initiative to revise the Land Development Code, which determines how land can be used throughout the city, including what can be built, where it can be built, and how much can be built.

**Continuum of Care (CoC)** A collaborative funding and planning approach that helps communities plan for and provide, as necessary, a full range of emergency, transitional, and permanent housing and other service resources to address the various needs of homeless persons. HUD also refers to the group of community stakeholders involved in the decision-making processes as the "Continuum of Care. In Austin/Travis County, ECHO is the CoC Lead Agency and is responsible for the coordination and oversight of the CoC planning efforts. The decision-making body of the CoC is called the Membership Council and meets once a month.

**Coordinated Assessment (CA)** assesses the needs of persons experiencing homelessness and matches them to housing programs per level of need and program availability. CA prioritizes a person's level of vulnerability compared to other homeless persons in the community who have been assessed with the same tool, and prioritizes serving persons ranked most vulnerable first.

**Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** Federal housing department which funds over \$5 million in Continuum of Care homeless assistance funding to Austin each year.

**Diversion** family re-unification strategies that keep people from entering emergency shelters by helping them identify and access alternate, safe housing arrangements outside of the homeless service system. For example, providing a bus or air ticket to reunify with family outside of Austin.

**Drop-in Center** facility that provides resources for persons experiencing homelessness during the day. Resources can include computers and Internet available for public use and staff who can direct persons to various services throughout the community.

**Emergency Shelter** Facilities that provide temporary or transitional shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless. Most serve specific sub-populations including single adults, families with children.

**Families with Children** include any households with children under 18.

**Functional Zero** refer to the concept of making homelessness becomes rare, brief, and non-recurring. In technical terms, it means that at any point in time, the number of persons experiencing homelessness will be no greater than the community's average monthly housing placement rate.

**High Opportunity Area** neighborhoods that offer quality housing and positive economic characteristics, e.g. has low poverty rates and high access to employment. High Opportunity Areas typically include access to jobs, transportation, education, and a healthy environment. These factors can affect a person's social mobility, health, and access to employment.

**Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST)** A multi-disciplinary team of police officers, paramedics, social workers, and behavioral health specialists that conducts outreach in downtown Austin, and connects persons experiencing homelessness to appropriate services.

**Homeless Preference Program** The Housing Authority developed a local preference program to annually assist up to 100 previously homeless individuals. Applicants need to be referred by a coalition of homeless service providers (ECHO). The homeless service providers are committed to providing referrals, case management, and housing search assistance.

**Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)** is a system-wide database that tracks the needs of households experiencing homelessness, services received across the community, and their outcomes.

**Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) Lead Agency** Organization designated by the CoC to administer and manage the HMIS. ECHO is the HMIS Lead Agency in Austin/Travis County.

**Household (HH)** an individual or group of individuals the present themselves as a family unit.

**Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)** financial assistance offered through local housing authorities to very low-income families, the elderly, and those with disabilities that helps pay the balance of a rental payment that exceeds 30% of a renters' monthly income.

**Housing Inventory Count (HIC)** Annual inventory of a CoC's emergency shelter, transitional housing, safe havens, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing resources for persons who are homeless in a CoC. The HIC includes both HUD and non-HUD funded shelter and housing resources.

**Housing First** an approach that centers on providing homeless people with housing quickly and then providing services that promote housing stability and individual well-being as needed. Such services are time-limited or long-term depending upon individual need; and housing is not

contingent on compliance with services – instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and are provided with the services and supports that are necessary to help them do so successfully.

**Housing Navigation** services that bridge the gap between homelessness and stable housing by connecting people to permanent housing solutions.

**Housing Unit** a residence (e.g. a house, apartment, mobile home) that provides a space for household members to live.

**Landlord Outreach Specialist** responsible for developing and maintaining working relationships with landlords and property managers to secure housing for persons experiencing homelessness.

**Low barrier housing** is housing that does not exclude program participants with criminal history, negative rental history, low income, and/or other rental barriers.

**Mainstream programs and services** are those that are not specifically targeted to, but which can serve, people experiencing homelessness. They include both entitlements and other benefits. They fall in three broad categories: health care, income support, and work support.

**Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness** federal initiative to end Veteran homelessness by 2015 across the country. Austin/Travis County participated and effectively ended Veteran homelessness in March 2016.

**Pay for Success (PFS)** an approach to contracting that ties payment for service delivery to the achievement of measurable outcomes. The movement towards PFS contracting is a means of ensuring that high-quality, effective social services are working for individuals and communities.

**Permanent Supportive Housing** combines non-time limited affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of persons with complex mental or physical health, addictions, or cognitive challenges. The services are designed to build independent living and tenancy skills and connect people with healthcare, substance treatment and employment services. In addition to ending a person's homelessness and increasing their housing stability, Permanent Supportive Housing has been shown to improve health and well-being.

**Point-in-time Count** - Annual count of the number of persons sleeping in shelters, in the streets or other places not meant for human habitation conducted during the last week of January every year by communities around the country.

**Public Housing Authority (PHA)** a governmental body that governs aspects of an area's housing. The Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) is the PHA for Austin, and the Housing Authority of Travis County (HATC) is the PHA for Travis County.

**Rapid Re-housing** quickly connects persons, with a mid-range level of needs, to permanent housing by addressing their immediate barriers to permanent housing.

**Support Services** include employment services, education support, parenting classes, connections to benefits, mental healthcare, substance use treatment, and basic needs, food, and clothing services.

**Transitional housing** facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families of all levels of need to permanent housing. Homeless persons may live in transitional housing for up to 24 months and receive supportive services such as childcare and job training.

**Unaccompanied Youth** include any youth under age 25 who do not have an adult or guardian responsible for their care.

**Unsheltered Homeless** Persons sleeping in places not meant for human habitation; such as abandoned buildings, parks, cars, sidewalks, or the streets.

**Veterans** include any person who served one day of active duty in the U.S. military, regardless of his or her discharge status.

**Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program:** The Austin/Travis County's Continuum of Care (CoC) was one of ten communities selected nationwide to participate on HUD's [Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program \(YHDP\)](#). In 2017, ECHO and partners developed the [Austin/Travis County Coordinated Community Plan](#) will begin implementation of plan in 2018.

## About ECHO

The Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) is a non-profit that plans, develops, prioritizes and implements systemic, community-wide strategies to end homelessness in Austin and Travis County, Texas. Together with its community partners, ECHO uses strategic, data-driven decision-making and innovative, bold thinking to transform the system to end homelessness. ECHO engages over 100 stakeholders every month through taskforces and working groups.

ECHO is recognized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as the Continuum of Care (CoC) lead agency, the local leader in coordinating the system of housing and services for persons experiencing homelessness. ECHO is also designated as the lead agency for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a system-wide database that tracks the needs of households experiencing homelessness, services received across the community and their outcomes.

## Questions or Comments

For questions, comments or for more information, please contact Ann Howard, ECHO Executive Director at [annhoward@austinecho.org](mailto:annhoward@austinecho.org) or Mariana Salazar, ECHO Director of Research and Evaluation at [marianasalazar@austinecho.org](mailto:marianasalazar@austinecho.org).