

**Meridian Township Community Resources Commission  
Needs Fund Report  
March 2024**

Starting Cash Balance **\$31,534.88**

Donations

Redi-Ride Sales	\$ 126.00
Employee Payroll Donation	\$ 38.48
Water Bill Roundup Gift	\$ 0.00: Hasn't been transferred.
Baby Bottle Boomerang	\$ 512.79
March Madness Donations	\$ 100.00
Kiwanis Donation	\$ 900.00
Consumers Energy Grant	\$2500.00
Other Resident Donations	\$ 250.00
Pop Can Return	\$ 8.00

Emergency Funds used in March \$2976.80

Ending Cash Balance **\$32,538.67**

Emergency Funds used in 2024 **\$9,529.63**

Consumers Grant Used in 2024/Remain. \$250.00/\$2250.00

PayPal Balance as of 3/31/24 \$3463.56

% of Budget Used 24%

% of year past 25%

Redi-Ride Passes sold in March 21

Redi-Ride Passes YTD 61

Other Spending

Family Groceries \$163.91

Date	Household	Assistance	Amount	Leverage	Authorization
03/04/24	J.P.	Utilities	448.90	0.00	Styka
03/13/24	M.W.	Rent	450.00	0.00	Styka
03/13/24	N.S.	Rent	205.00	0.00	Styka
03/13/24	N.S.	Utility	87.49	0.00	Styka
03/13/24	J.M.	Utility	285.41	0.00	Styka

03/25/24	A.H.	Rent	500.00	758.00	Styka
03/25/24	R.W.	Rent	500.00	3660.97	Styka
03/25/24	M.T.	Rent	500.00	700.00	Styka
			<b>\$2976.80</b>	<b>\$5,118.97</b>	

Consumers Grant Used

Original total of Grant \$2500.00

Remining to Use

03/25/24	R.W.	Rent	<b>250.00</b>	<b>250.00</b>	2250.00
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Other March Notes:

- Made and sent an invitation to our Community Resource Commission that will take place on Tuesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024.
- Katie Love took the Mental Health First Aid Class. Very insightful and learned a lot.
- Lori Noyer from Ingham Health Plan spoke at the March 2024 CRC meeting. Very informative.
- Met Tom from Farmers Market. Talked about ways to spread the word about Senior Project Fresh, Bridge Cards and double up food bucks. Working with Communications to display Meridian Cares information at the market.
- Worked with a family who suffered kitchen fire at Cedar Creek. Extensive outreach and resources gathered.
- Katie spoke at the senior center about the Five Wishes program. Four seniors were in attendance.
- Katie and Naren participated in a HOMTV interview spotlighting MC.
- Received the \$2500.00 check from Consumers for Emergency needs not related to utilities.
- Applied for TC Energy grant for Thanksgiving/Holiday 2024.

U.S. Government Accountability Office

[< WatchBlog: Following the Federal Dollar](#)

# What can the Great Recession teach us about rent affordability in the age of Coronavirus?

Posted on July 07, 2020



The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides relief to some homeowners. But what about renter households?

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of Americans have lost their jobs and are struggling to make rent payments.

In today's WatchBlog, we look at government actions in response to the coronavirus that affect renter households and the rental market, including how current rental market conditions compare to those from the Great Recession.

You can also tune into our podcast with GAO's top housing expert Daniel Garcia-Diaz to learn more about rental housing trends.

0:00 / 5:08

Transcript

## What makes rent unaffordable?

Rent is considered unaffordable if households pay more than 30% of their income for it. For decades, rent costs have risen faster than income, which has made rent unaffordable for a growing portion of households in the U.S., particularly those with

low incomes. Low wage growth among lower-income households and increasing costs to build new apartments have long contributed to this rising unaffordability.

### **How did the Great Recession impact rent affordability?**

The Great Recession (2007 to 2011) led to higher rents because of an increased competition for affordable units and a limited supply of new affordable units:

- Millions of households lost their homes to foreclosure during the recession and became renters. Impacts to these households' credit scores along with tighter mortgage underwriting standards have kept many in the rental market.
- Millennials, many of whom entered the job market around the time of the recession, had to compete for fewer opportunities. Poor economic conditions delayed homeownership and kept them in the rental market longer than previous generations.
- The construction industry, which contracted during the recession, struggled to build enough new rental units to keep up with demand. Most of the rental construction following the crisis concentrated on high-rent, luxury units.

### **How could COVID-19 impact rents?**

Federal, state, and local governments have taken actions in response to the coronavirus that could affect rental housing affordability:

- As we saw in the Great Recession, when millions of homeowners lost their homes, they entered the rental market and drove up rent prices. The CARES Act allows some homeowners affected by the coronavirus to delay mortgage payments for up to a year. This step could help rent affordability if it prevents foreclosures on the millions of homeowners who may no longer be able to afford their mortgage payments. However, if the economic effects of COVID-19 last longer and foreclosure preventions expire,, the rental market could see higher demand, causing increases to rent.
- The CARES Act temporarily prohibits landlords with federally backed mortgages from evicting tenants for not paying rent. In addition, some state and local governments have implemented their own eviction moratoriums. However, renters are still on the hook for rent payments, which could become unaffordable due to reduced or lost wages.
- In some regions, state and local governments have allowed construction of new rental units to continue; while in others, work was stopped to slow the spread of coronavirus. In both cases, the construction industry faces economic uncertainties, which could further reduce production of new rental units. Fewer new rental units will lead to higher rents.

Prolonged distress in the housing market will likely have negative impacts on rent affordability. In our 2020 report, we found that there were more than 3 million additional households with rent burden in 2017 than there were in 2007, half of which paid more than 50% of their household income for rent.

Unaffordable rent was most common and most severe among lower-income households, with most of the poorest households paying more than half of their income in rent. The figure below shows the estimated percentage of renter households and rent burdens by income in 2017.

To learn more about rental housing market trends, check out our new report.

- 
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## Topics

Housing    Department of Housing and Urban Development    Affordable housing

Rental housing    Rental rates    Financial Markets and Community Investment

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< WatchBlog: Following the Federal Dollar

# The Affordable Housing Crisis Grows While Efforts to Increase Supply Fall Short

Posted on October 12, 2023



Shortages of affordable housing are a long-standing challenge in the United States. High interest rates and low inventory are contributing to this issue, as is the growing number of millennials, who are looking for larger homes to raise families. For low-income Americans, the hunt for affordable housing can be especially tough.

Increasing the supply of housing is one way to address shortages and provide more affordable options. Today's WatchBlog post looks at our recent work on efforts to expand affordable housing options.



**Encouraging affordable housing**

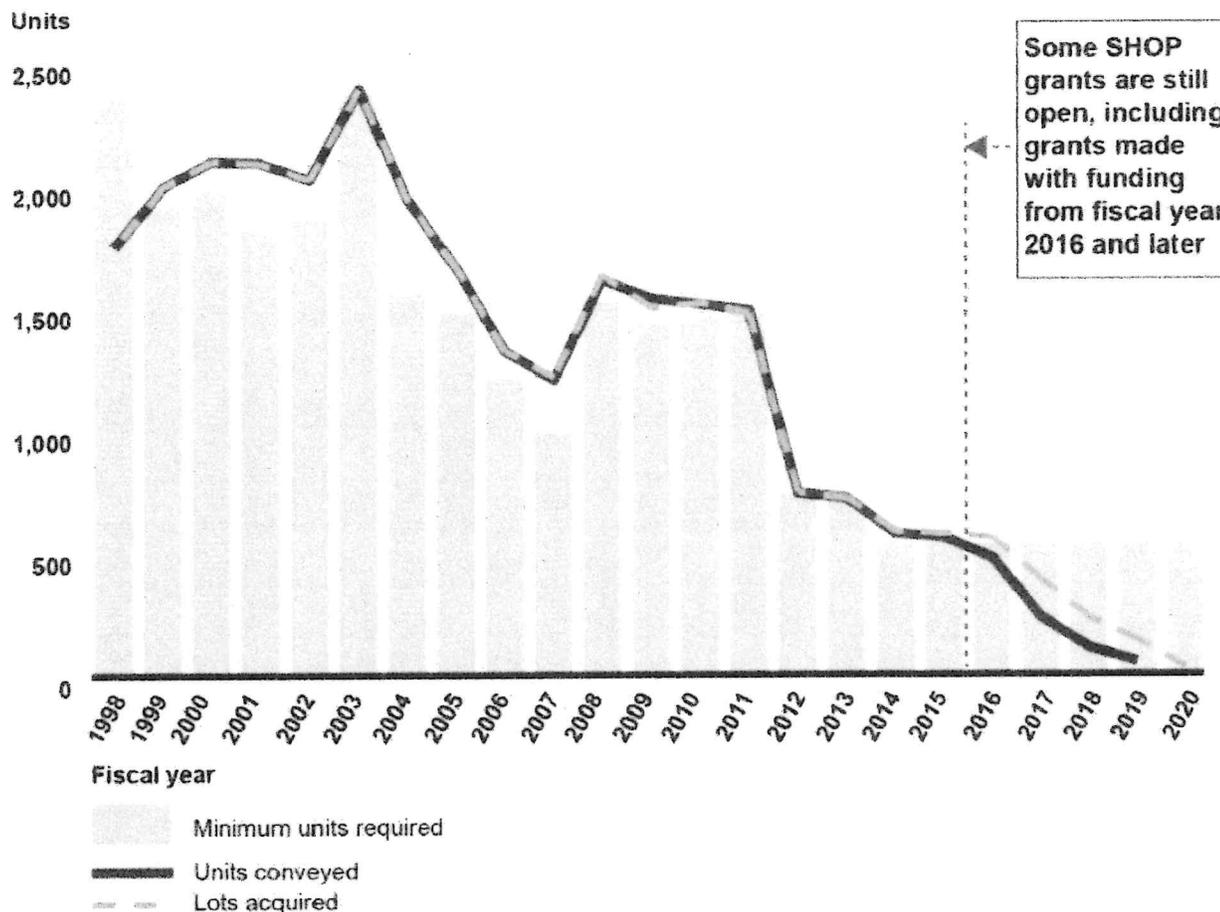
The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) leads housing efforts at the national level. This includes everything from mortgage programs to construction. HUD has multiple programs that aim to increase the supply of affordable housing. One of these is the ~~the~~ Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP).

The SHOP program provides grants to nonprofits to help develop affordable housing units for low-income buyers. In our July and September 2023 reports, we found that SHOP grants helped build homes in more than 40 states and 140 metropolitan areas between fiscal years 2011 and 2020.

However, rising land and construction costs have put pressure on the program. For example, land prices increased 60% from 2012-2019, and the cost of homes more than doubled from 1998 to 2021. But HUD doesn't adjust spending limits for grant recipients' activities to keep pace with these increased costs. We found that the number of units required to be built with grant funding had declined dramatically overtime.

To help HUD make needed adjustments, we recommended that it use relevant data to determine when and how much to adjust spending limits.

### **Changes in SHOP's Affordable Housing Development, FY1998-2020**



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) data. | GAO-23-106628

Manufactured homes—homes that are built in factories—can be an affordable option for some, including lower-income homebuyers. Homebuyers can pay for these homes by taking out a mortgage loan, just like for other home purchases. But sometimes traditional loans are difficult to obtain when purchasing manufactured homes. This could mean that some borrowers use other kinds of financing, such as personal property loans, which can have less favorable rates and terms. Our September report found that HUD and several other federal agencies have taken steps to make manufactured housing loans more affordable. But HUD has not fully implemented proposed changes that would improve homebuyer access to loans for manufactured homes.

We recommended HUD implement planned changes, including establishing time frames and milestones for its actions, to provide additional financing options for manufactured homes.

### What about renters?



As demand for affordable housing continues to grow, so will the need for affordable options. Learn more about our work on federal efforts to address affordable housing by checking our key issue page.

- GAO's fact-based, nonpartisan information helps Congress and federal agencies improve government. The WatchBlog lets us contextualize GAO's work a little more for the public. Check out more of our posts at [GAO.gov/blog](https://www.gao.gov/blog).

## Topics

Housing

Department of Housing and Urban Development

Affordable housing

Housing

Manufactured housing

Manufactured homes

Housing costs

Financial Markets and Community Investment

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< WatchBlog: Following the Federal Dollar

# How Can Low-Income Renters Find Affordable Housing?

Posted on October 18, 2018



Low-income renters often face difficulties finding housing they can afford. But a federal program—the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)—helps encourage developing this type of housing. This tax credit program has helped finance about 50,000 affordable rental units annually. The IRS administers the program along with state housing finance agencies.

But how much does it cost to build an affordable rental unit? Today's WatchBlog explores.

## How does the program work?

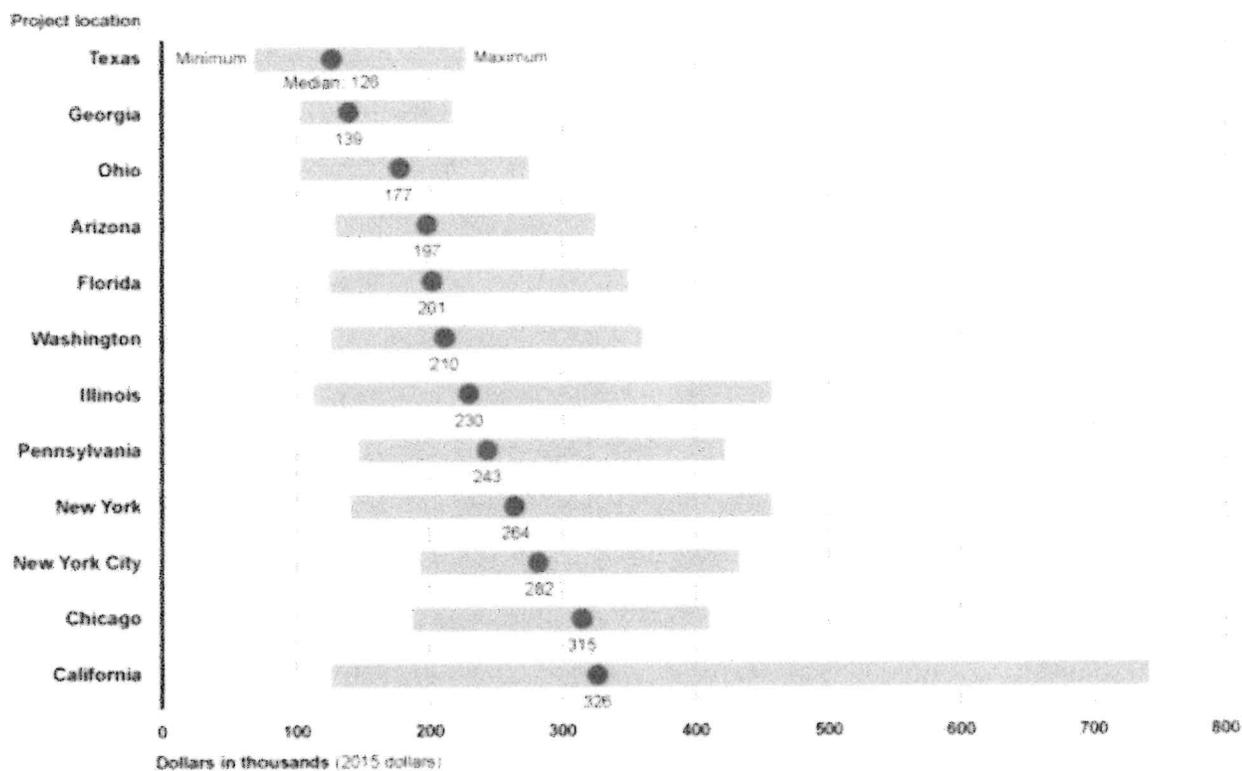
The program works by attracting private developers to build new or rehabilitate existing projects. Developers get funding for the projects by finding investors who can then claim tax credits for their financing. The private investments lower the debt burden for LIHTC project development, making it possible for project owners to offer lower, more affordable rents. The amount of the tax credit that investors receive depends largely on a project's costs.

## What does it cost to build affordable rental housing?

Costs for developing affordable rental housing vary widely across the United States. We analyzed the per-unit cost of LIHTC projects in selected locations as part of our recent study. We found that costs differ vastly among and within state locations:

- Among state locations, the median per-unit cost for new construction projects was \$218,000 but ranged from \$126,000 in Texas to \$326,000 in California.
- Within each state location, costs could vary widely. The difference between the least and most expensive projects in Georgia was \$104,000 per unit, while the cost range increased to \$606,000 per unit in California.

### Development Costs (per unit) for New Rental Housing Built with Funding That Included Tax Credits, Selected States and Cities, 2011–2015



Source: GAO analysis of data from state and local housing finance agencies. | GAO-18-437

### Why do costs vary so much?

The LIHTC program gives states the flexibility to address local housing needs, where conditions, such as land prices, construction type, and tenant characteristics, vary widely as well.

More specifically, we found that a number of characteristics help explain some of the cost variation. For example, controlling for other factors:

- New construction projects had higher per-unit costs than rehabilitation projects
- Larger projects (more than 100 units) had lower per-unit costs than smaller projects (fewer than 37 units)
- Projects in urban areas had higher per-unit costs than those in suburban areas
- Projects serving seniors had lower per-unit costs (due to smaller residential square footage) than non-senior projects

Greater understanding of the factors that affect affordable housing costs may help states better manage the expenses involved in developing affordable rental projects using the LIHTC program.

Check out our full report to learn more.

- 
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## Topics

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## Related Posts

# Lansing mixed-use affordable housing project receives state tax credit

WKAR Public Media | By Arjun Thakkar

Published August 18, 2023 at 9:57 AM EDT



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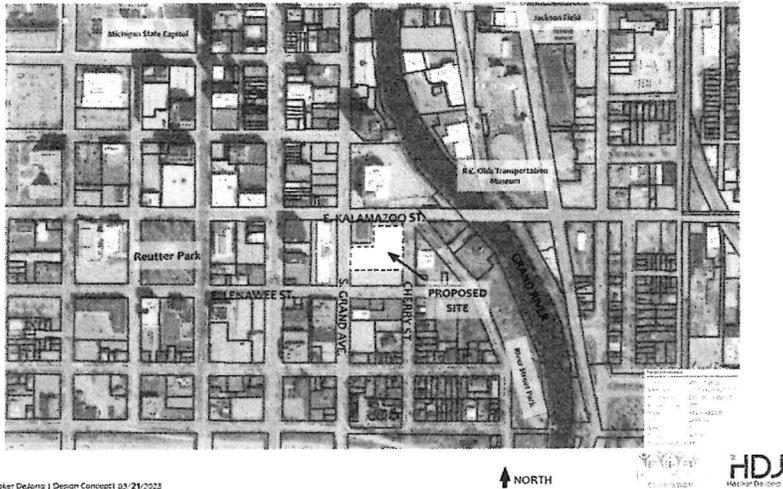
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A rendering of the Riverview 220 housing project to be constructed along Kalamazoo Street.

A proposal to build more than 60 new rental units in downtown Lansing is receiving a state tax credit.

The Lansing Housing Commission has proposed constructing a building with affordable and market rate apartments along Kalamazoo Street between Grand Avenue and Cherry Street, the site of a vacant building that used to belong to Davenport University.

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**PROJECT OVERVIEW | PROJECT LOCATION**

*Courtesy / Lansing Housing Commission*

The development would be constructed across the street from the CATA Transportation Center and other landmarks in Lansing.

56 units in the development project would be designated for lower-income residents, and seven would be market-rate apartments.

The project, called Riverview 220, is receiving support with a \$1.5 million tax credit from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

LHC Executive Director Doug Fleming said the Lansing area has "a very big demand" for more affordable housing options. He said the project would be the city's first mixed-income housing property.

Fleming added the building's location will keep residents' daily necessities in close proximity.

"People can walk to food and groceries and all the other stuff, and it's also right across the street from the (Capital Area Transportation Authority) bus station, so for those that need transportation, it's gonna be literally right outside their doorstep," he said.

The building will also include space for commercial and retail businesses. The project will comply with MSHDA parking requirements with more than 60 vehicle parking spots.

Under MSHDA requirements, the building's affordable rental units will be required to remain tailored to lower-income residents for 40-50 years, even if ownership of the

Fleming said the project is unique because it will be able accommodate larger families with two and three-bedroom apartments.

“We have a significant shortage in the city of threes, fours, and five (bedroom apartments) if they’re out there, there’s not a lot of those, for people who are looking for affordable housing, so basically mid-size families,” he said.

Fleming expects construction to begin next year, with the project expected to be completed by mid 2026.

Officials in the city are backing three other development projects downtown that will have dedicated affordable workforce leases.

**Tags**

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**Arjun Thakkar**

Arjun Thakkar is WKAR's politics and civics reporter.

See stories by Arjun Thakkar

# Lansing State Journal

## new or repaired housing units



**Mike Ellis**

Lansing State Journal

Published 2:37 p.m. ET April 1, 2024 | Updated 8:53 a.m. ET April 2, 2024

*Correction: Emma Henry is the executive director of the Capital Area Housing Partnership. Her title was incorrect in an earlier version of this story.*

LANSING — The new MI Neighborhood grant program, with \$60 million a year, could help Lansing area homeowners and developers fix up broken homes and build new ones.

The Lansing area is expected to get about \$3.5 million of that grant money to help some of its estimated 7,500 homes that are in significant need of repairs, state officials announced Monday.

The money could also be used for new housing developments.

Local leaders including Lansing Mayor Andy Schor gathered Monday at the Neighborhood Empowerment Center in Lansing to announce the new grant program with 15 eligible regions including the capital city.

"Organizations like us make sure we can get the dollars into the community," said Emma Henry, executive director of the Capital Area Housing Partnership, which is the local housing agency for Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties.

Individuals cannot directly apply for the grant money but they can reach out to their local housing agencies, she said. Those agencies can guide homeowners through the application and income verification processes and submit the grant applications on behalf of homeowners, builders and those working with contractors.

The group gets calls daily from people who need a new roof or struggle to make mortgage payments, she said.

The application process for the grants opened Monday. The applications will be ranked by state officials, using criteria from each of the 15 eligible regions.

# Lansing State Journal

helping transform the way our state government works with local partners. Together we're going to solve the housing crisis. Let's get it done.”

Those with up to two new units can qualify for up to \$200,000; intermediate applicants, with three or four units, up to \$400,000; and larger developments, up to \$2 million.

The new grant money is part of the state budget. Another \$60 million will be included in the fiscal year that starts in October.

*Contact Mike Ellis at [mellis@lsj.com](mailto:mellis@lsj.com) or 517-267-0415*



**BREAKING NEWS:** An earthquake with a preliminary 4.8 magnitude rattles the Northeastern U.S., USGS says

Lansing State Journal

# Sparrow donating vacant homes near hospital to county land bank, Habitat for Humanity

Mike Ellis, Lansing State Journal

Wed, April 3, 2024 at 3:15 PM EDT · 2 min read



LANSING — University of Michigan Health-Sparrow has donated nine Lansing homes on the east end of its Michigan Avenue campus to the Ingham County Land Bank and Habitat for Humanity Capital Region, which are partnering to renovate the homes for single family housing.

Margaret Dimond, regional president of University of Michigan Health-Sparrow, said during a Wednesday presentation at one of the gifted homes that authorizing the donation was one of her first decisions once she acquired a new title in August.

The homes and two vacant lots with a total value of up to \$2 million in the Eastfield neighborhood and mostly within sight of the Sparrow hospital have frequently experienced vandalism or squatters, with police or hospital security filing reports almost twice a week.

Dimond said Wednesday the hospital system has an obligation to be a good neighbor and wanted to make the area safer.



Three properties University of Michigan Health - Sparrow will hand over to Ingham County Land Bank on Wednesday, April 3, 2024, in Lansing.

She said the homes were acquired years ago, well before Sparrow merged with U-M Health last year, and there were no plans for the properties so it was best to donate them.

Other unused Sparrow-owned properties, some in industrial and commercial zones, are being evaluated for potential sale or future use as part of the merger, Dimond said.



Ingham County Treasurer Alan Fox points to properties to be received by the Ingham County Land Bank during a press conference announcing University of Michigan Health - Sparrow's donation of properties to the county land bank and Habitat for Humanity on Wednesday, April 3, 2024, in La ... More

Ingham County Land Bank is expected to start work in about two months **on five of the homes** and finish around fall 2025, said Alan Fox, the county treasurer and chairman of the Land Bank.

The homes will be a "big deal to this community," said Brent Taylor, president and CEO of the local Habitat for Humanity, which is getting the rest of the homes.



The renovations will be funded, at least in part, by a state blight elimination fund, Fox said, which will mean the land bank can help turn the homes into usable housing without spending too much.

"These will be not just single family, owner-occupied," he said, "but these will be homes for members who may not otherwise be able to afford it."

Contact Mike Ellis at [mellis@lsj.com](mailto:mellis@lsj.com) or 517-267-0415

*This article originally appeared on Lansing State Journal: Sparrow donating vacant homes to county land bank, Habitat for Humanity*

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**Up next**

WLNS Lansing

## Sparrow Lansing will turn vacant houses into family homes

Rae Sherman

Wed, April 3, 2024 at 8:30 PM EDT · 2 min read



LANSING, Mich. (WLNS) — Sparrow calls it a "first-of-its-kind" initiative—one they hope will improve the neighborhood that surrounds the Lansing hospital.

Sparrow Hospital and the University of Michigan Health made the announcement this Wednesday that they plan to turn vacant houses in the area into family homes.

"Lansing is one of the most affordable cities in the country," said Lansing Mayor Andy Schor. "And taking down housing is a problem, because we want to have that housing available for people to come live here."

be demolished. But that plan changed.

Instead, they will be refurbished and renovated.

“We’re here to meet the needs of our patients, but also our community and our neighbors,” Dimond said. “We’ve been in continuous dialogue about making improvements that will help impact the community.”



Sparrow Hospital and UM Health plan to restore vacant houses around the Lansing hospital and turn them into single-family homes. (WLNS)

Habitat for Humanity officials say they are looking to match the fixed-up houses with people in low-to-middle-income families.

What’s most exciting to me is not just that these homes will be single-family, owner-occupied homes, but that they will be homes for members of our community who might not otherwise have the ability to purchase a home,” said Brent Taylor, President of Habitat for Humanity Capital Region.

Neighbors say these houses have been vacant for years. They are looking forward to the project that they hope will make this area a vibrant place to live and work.

“They remain unoccupied for a while,” said Margaret Tassarò, President of Eastfield Neighborhood Association. “And, you know, no one wants to have a block of vacant houses in their neighborhood. We want neighbors. We want a community.”

Officials said state funds will be used to complete the project.

Construction is set to begin in the next few months.

For the latest news, weather, sports, and streaming video, head to WLNS 6 News.

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City Rescue Mission on verge of huge ex...



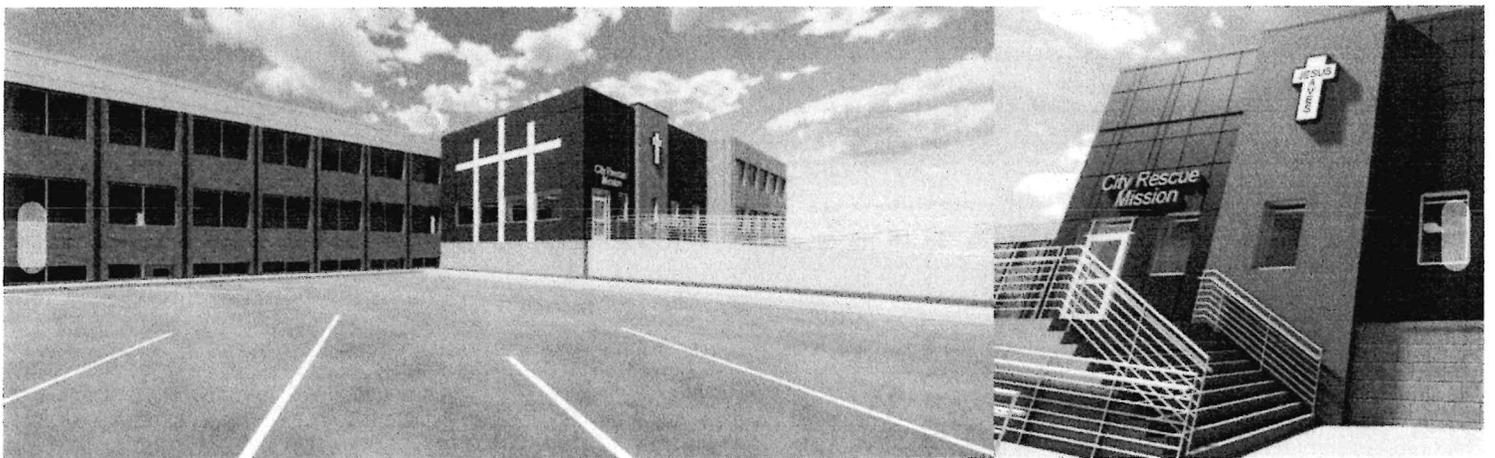
on verge of huge expansion

LANSING, Mich. (WLNS) — City Rescue Mission of Lansing is opening another – bigger – location on West Kalamazoo Street. It’s expected to double the shelter’s capacity — for both men and women.

“We’ve already discussed this with guests at Michigan Avenue,” Laura Grimwood, Director of Community Engagement at the City Rescue Mission of Lansing told 6 News. “And they’re excited about the new options they’re going to have over here.”

51°

SIGN UP



City Rescue Mission on verge of huge expansion. (Image: City Rescue Mission)

City Rescue Mission on verge of huge expansion. (Image: City Rescue Mission)

One of the buildings used to be office space for the Michigan Correction Organization and will be a warm place for people to sleep, shower, do

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The \$10 million project solves a big problem at the mission's current 100-bed location on Michigan Avenue which is filling up almost every night. "That space on West Kalamazoo will about double our space, double our capacity, which is a big need in the city for our homeless population," Brenton Barglof, Michigan Avenue shelter director, told 6 News.

"Taking the next step toward independence, and recognizing that yes they are people with needs, but they are people with needs," Grimwood said.

City Rescue Mission on verge of huge ex...

officials said it should take about a year before services will be available.

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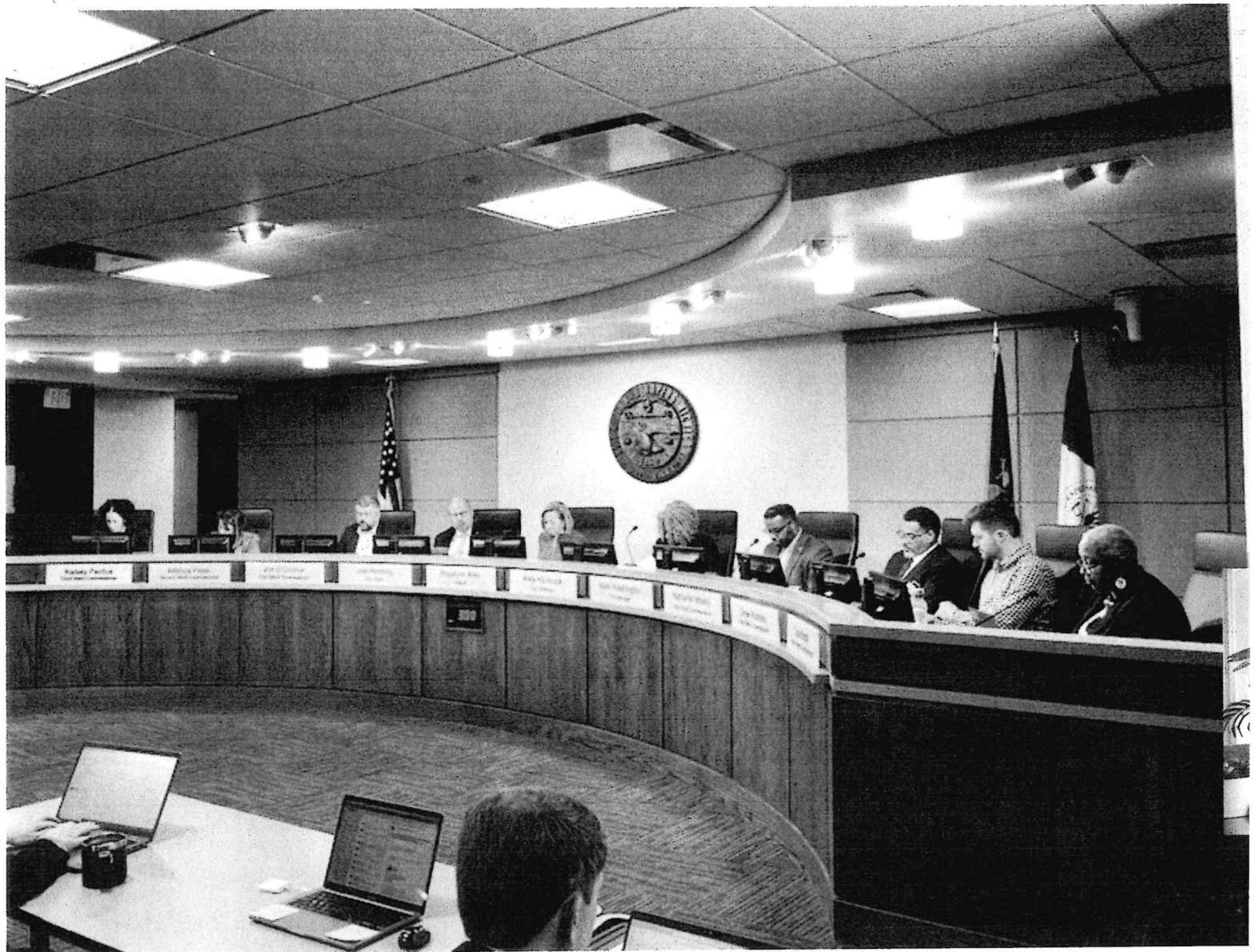
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**GRAND RAPIDS**

# **Grand Rapids leaders continue discussions on how to address homelessness in new year**

Updated: Jan. 10, 2023, 8:45 p.m. | Published: Jan. 10, 2023, 8:44 p.m.



Grand Rapids city commissioners meeting for a regular session Tuesday, Jan. 10. (Melissa Frick | MFrick@MLive.com)



By **Melissa Frick | mfrick@mlive.com**

GRAND RAPIDS, MI – Working to address concerns about homelessness in Grand Rapids will continue to be a top priority for city leaders in the new calendar year.

The Grand Rapids City Commission received a presentation from city staff Tuesday, Jan. 10, that outlined what kinds of organizations, resources and initiatives are already in place to help homeless individuals in Grand Rapids.

Ad removed. [Details](#)

“Today was an important conversation that we needed to have publicly as we talk about, what is the state of the current system, what is working well and what is not working, and how does the city play a role in improving services for individuals experiencing homelessness?” Mayor Rosalynn Bliss told MLive after the city commission meeting Tuesday.

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The commissioners' discussions about homelessness comes as downtown business leaders are pushing for the city to consider a pair of draft ordinances that would effectively forbid panhandling and sleeping or sitting on sidewalks downtown.

**RELATED:** Grand Rapids business owners want city to fine panhandlers, people sitting on the sidewalk

City commissioners have not taken the measures up for consideration since they were first presented on Dec. 6, and have given no indication they will so far.

The proposed ordinances were first presented to the city commission last month by the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, with the backing of more than 100 area businesses and residents, Mel Trotter Ministries and more.

The draft ordinances would effectively ban panhandling throughout most of downtown and forbid people from sitting or sleeping on sidewalks. The proposed offenses would be punishable by fines of up to \$100 for a first offense and up to \$500 and 90 days in jail for a second offense.

Supporters of the draft ordinances who spoke at previous city meetings cited instances of public defecation, public sex, harassed workers, aggressive panhandling, street fights and people laying in business doorways. Some business owners said their staff and customers have felt unsafe.

Opponents of the proposals say it would essentially criminalize homelessness. Since the Dec. 6 presentation about the proposal, the city has received letters and petitions representing hundreds of community members who oppose the proposal, some calling the draft ordinances “ridiculous and cruel.”

City manager Mark Washington said Tuesday that trying to tackle concerns about homelessness will be challenging, because these issues are long-standing and systemic.

Before deciding how the city should get involved in the ongoing discussion, Washington said the first step will be figuring out what is already being done to address homelessness in Grand Rapids, and where there are still areas of need.

“We know that this can be an issue that polarizes people based on your perspective,” the city manager said Tuesday. “So what we hope to do is just call it like it is, balls and strikes, and share the facts about what’s happening in our community in terms of the people that are partnering in this work, and to look for opportunities in the future to improve on the work that’s going on.”

Grand Rapids managing director of community services Connie Bohatch provided the Committee of the Whole with a broad overview Tuesday of the history of the response to homelessness in Grand Rapids, which included local and regional initiatives as well as federal resources.

Bohatch also gave a snapshot of the most recently available numbers of homelessness in Grand Rapids, as well as how many shelters there are in the city.

An annual survey conducted in January 2022 by the Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness found that a total of 1,044 people were experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

The data also shows there are 51 “unsheltered” individuals, or people who don’t have a place to sleep at night, living in Kent County. Of those people, 36 are in the city of Grand Rapids.

City staff said that oftentimes, the city has options available for homeless individuals to receive shelter during the night, but they choose not to for various reasons including mental health struggles and trauma from past experiences.

Commissioner Jon O’Connor asked city staff whether there is one specific agency that is tasked with reaching out to those unsheltered individuals and making sure they have a place to sleep at night.

“If there are people out there that are the difficult people to get into a bed, who’s taking the lead responsibility to say, ‘I want that person to sleep in a bed tonight?’” O’Connor said.

City staff said that was something they could follow-up on at the city’s next discussion about homelessness.

Bliss said she thinks there is some misperception in the community about the role the city can play in addressing homelessness.

The mayor explained there is no singular municipality that is in charge of addressing homelessness in Grand Rapids -- the city and the county both help fund some of the services that help homeless people, but the government bodies don’t directly provide those services.

“I want to be realistic about what is the role of the city and the county to be a part of the solution, knowing that neither the city nor the county provide direct services,” she said Tuesday.

The topic of homelessness will next come up at the city’s Public Safety Committee at 12:30 p.m. Jan. 24, when city staff will provide another presentation to answer some of the commissioners’ questions from Tuesday’s meeting.

### **More on MLive:**

[Students suspended as result of racist taunts at basketball game, Jenison superintendent says](#)

[Alcohol-free drinks flow in Michigan as more businesses enter market](#)

[Gov. Whitmer commutes life-without-parole sentence of Bay County woman convicted of murdering husband in 1990](#)



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The next step for city leaders will be figuring out where there are gaps in those resources, and how the city can play a role in addressing some of those needs, officials said Tuesday.

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# Homelessness

## Overview

We develop, support and promote solutions that reduce homelessness in our community and support individuals and families in need through City-wide initiatives and strategic partnerships.

Any individual or family who is experiencing housing instability (homeless or soon to be homeless) should call 2-1-1.

## Philosophy & Mission

The City of Grand Rapids is committed to a Housing First approach, which is an evidence-based practice to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements ([National Alliance to End Homelessness \(https://endhomelessness.org/\)](https://endhomelessness.org/)).

We are committed to developing, supporting and promoting solutions that create a direct impact in reducing homelessness and supporting individuals and families in need. We believe housing is the answer to homelessness demonstrated by our history of supporting homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing efforts. We also believe this is a community-wide effort that requires dedicated and results-oriented partnerships.

One key objective of our City's [Strategic Plan \(https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Office-of-the-City-Manager/Strategic-Plan\)](https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Office-of-the-City-Manager/Strategic-Plan) is to support efforts to ensure all residents have safe, stable and permanent housing.

HOMELESSNESS WORK GROUP

The Homelessness Work Group launched in October 2020 as a function of the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The group has executive level-leadership and is an interdisciplinary team, authorized and empowered to act in emergency management mode. Executive staff from the following departments are represented: Grand Rapids Fire Department, Grand Rapids Police Department, Executive Office, Public Services, Code Compliance and Community Development.

Its mission is to protect health and safety and improve outcomes for homeless persons and our community by addressing immediate, emerging and systemic conditions made worse by COVID-19 with a goal to coordinate homelessness efforts in the city of Grand Rapids.

### **The Homelessness Work Group focuses on a three-phase action plan:**

- Immediate actions to mitigate impacts on persons experiencing homelessness, businesses and neighborhoods;
- Mid-term actions to begin to address systemic issues both independently and with partners; and
- Long-term actions to sustain an effective response to homelessness.

A Homelessness Coordinator position was created in fall 2020 to lead initiatives and strategies that support the mission and goals of the Homelessness Work Group and advance the City's work in homelessness toward sustainable, evidence-based solutions. The City has traditionally been engaged in homelessness issues, but has committed through this role to address growing community concern about the health and safety of our unsheltered residents, the impacts on our business community and the direct and effective coordination of City services with community service providers.

#### INITIATIVES

The City of Grand Rapids has developed and supported community-based initiatives that assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness. This includes building partnerships with housing and homeless service providers to directly address this issue.

**The following are examples of recent initiatives we have implemented and/or supported:**

- The Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)
- Geographically Targeted Housing Outreach (<https://communitybuilders.org/geographically-targeted-outreach/>) & Monroe Center Project
- Frequent Users System Engagement (FUSE) (<https://dwellingplacegr.org/fuse/>)
- Built for Zero (<https://community.solutions/built-for-zero/>)
- Winter emergency shelter expansion at 250 Ionia (2020-2021) & 200 S. Division (2021-2022)

Our partnerships with community organizations and nonprofits are a key factor in reducing homelessness in our community. We invest federal grant funds annually to support homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, additional investments have supported street outreach efforts and increased emergency shelter capacity.

#### HOMELESS OUTREACH TEAM (HOT)

In April 2020, the City of Grand Rapids developed the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) to provide COVID-19 education and mitigate its spread among persons experiencing homelessness. The team has transitioned to an ongoing, active homeless outreach unit. Its mission is “to preserve health and safety and improve outcomes for homeless persons and our community.” HOT provides a “boots on the ground” presence on a daily basis. The team canvasses the community to interact with unsheltered persons and engage with businesses and residents to resolve issues. It also works to build relationships with individuals experiencing homelessness to better assist them in obtaining services and connecting to housing solutions.

There are four members on the Homeless Outreach Team – two police officers and two fire personnel – who are under the supervision of the Grand Rapids Fire Department. A contract with Network180 has added two social workers and two addiction specialists to the team. HOT works in the community Monday through Saturday and only responds to issues related to street homelessness.

[Click here to view the HOT Dashboard](https://data.grandrapidsmi.gov/stories/s/9jez-kh7n)  
(<https://data.grandrapidsmi.gov/stories/s/9jez-kh7n>).

HOT can be reached about issues related to street homelessness at [616-456-4240](tel:6164564240) (tel:[6164564240](tel:6164564240)) and via email at [grhot@grcity.us](mailto:grhot@grcity.us) (mailto:[grhot@grcity.us](mailto:grhot@grcity.us)). Click here for [frequently asked questions about the Homeless Outreach Team](https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Community-Development/Homelessness/Outreach-Team-FAQ) (<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Community-Development/Homelessness/Outreach-Team-FAQ>).

## FUNDING

Funding for City initiatives to reduce homelessness and address housing needs primarily comes from federal grant awards. The City of Grand Rapids' Community Development Department allocates funds based on its Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan in accordance with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

For full details on funding, find the Annual Action Plan under "Reports and Plans" on the [Community Development](https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Community-Development) (<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Community-Development>) page.

## CONTINUUM OF CARE

Our efforts are one part in a larger system in addressing housing and homelessness. We actively participate in the Grand Rapids Coalition to End Homelessness (CTEH) – a collaborative of more than 60 organizations, agencies, municipalities, and individuals who come together with the shared goal of ending homelessness.

The CTEH serves as the Grand Rapids/Wyoming/Kent County Continuum of Care (CoC) with specific responsibilities to comply with the HEARTH Act, the guiding legislation for US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding targeted to address homelessness.

For more information on the Continuum of Care, visit <http://endhomelessnesskent.org/about/>  
(<http://endhomelessnesskent.org/about/>)

#### EQUITY IN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The City of Grand Rapids is dedicated to advancing racial equity through key measures in its [Strategic Plan](https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Office-of-the-City-Manager/Strategic-Plan)  
(<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Office-of-the-City-Manager/Strategic-Plan>).

#### RESOURCES FOR ASSISTANCE

Any individual or family who is experiencing housing instability (homeless or soon to be homeless) should call [211 \(tel:211\)](tel:211).

#### **Homeless Outreach Team**

The Homeless Outreach Team can be reached with issues related to street homelessness at [616-456-4240 \(tel:6164564240\)](tel:6164564240) and via email at [grhot@grcity.us \(mailto:grhot@grcity.us\)](mailto:grhot@grcity.us).

#### **Housing and Urban Development**

##### HUD Resources

(<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-First-Permanent-Supportive-Housing-Brief.pdf>)

#### **Donate or Volunteer**

If you are interested in donating or volunteering, please contact one of the local service providers in our community.

## HEADLINES &amp; RELATED DOCUMENTS

## Heartside Park Questions and Answers

Find answers to questions about community outreach and other topics related to Heartside Park.

(<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Directory/Places/Parks/Heartside-Park/Questions-and-Answers>)

## Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to your questions about our Homeless Outreach Team (HOT).

(<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Community-Development/Homelessness/Outreach-Team-FAQ>)

## Emergency Shelter and Addressing Unsafe Conditions in Heartside Park

Following multiple weeks of outreach by City staff and social service partner organizations, the City addressed unsafe conditions in Heartside Park beginning the morning of Monday, December 21.

(<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/City-Commission/City-Commission-Briefings/2020-12-28-Update-on-Emergency-Shelter-and-Addressing-Unsafe-Conditions-in-Heartside-Park>)

## City works to find solutions to homelessness

Announcement of a new winter emergency shelter in the Heartside neighborhood\* is the latest measure taken by the City of Grand Rapids and its partners to assist persons experiencing homelessness. It's part of a larger series of actions taken by City Hall to lead, promote and support solutions to homelessness.

(<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Our-City/News-Media/City-works-to-find-solutions-to-homelessness>)

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[View Map \(https://maps.google.com/?](https://maps.google.com/?q=300%20Monroe%20Ave.%20NW,%20Suite%20460%20Grand%20Rapids%2049503)

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**UNITED WAY 211**

Any individual or family who is experiencing housing instability (homeless or soon to be homeless) should call 2-1-1.

**Call 211 (tel:211)**

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

One of the key objectives our City's Strategic Plan is to support efforts to ensure all residents have safe, stable and permanent housing.

**More Info (<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Office-of-the-City-Manager/Strategic-Plan>)**



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# FORSBERG BRINGS MILLENNIAL HOUSING TO REO TOWN

By [Adam Lansdell](#) | [Business](#), [News](#)

Nestled just outside of Lansing's REO Town sits a home unlike any other in the area. It's small but not hard to miss. With its bright blue paint, unique design and a silver-plated sigil embedded in the driveway, this home looks different because it is different. It's one of T.A. Forsberg Inc.'s latest creations — the first of many of its kind — set to alter the way we view the necessities of living.

Named after the Swahili word for elephant, these small homes are filled with might, style, efficiency and, most importantly, necessities. Despite the size of the home, which sits at just around 600 square feet, these unique structures were bred to create an attainable, functional living scenario for residents that need the bare minimum at home and have instead opted to take life's biggest adventures on the road. With plans to create more, Brent Forsberg and his team are looking to place these exciting new builds within existing neighborhoods to attract the young, adventurous residents that will breathe new life into the region.

"Tembo was designed to fit the needs of a variety of lifestyles," said Gina Pons-Shultz, operations and project manager at Forsberg. "Our primary focus is on millennials and young professionals who are moving to the Lansing area or have just begun their careers here, but we

also see it as a great option for those further along in life, such as empty nesters who want to downsize.”

The focus on millennials is a sound decision, as the generation’s demand for housing options is not only at its all-time high, but at its most unattainable in terms of price. With an average salary of \$40,581, millennials earn 20 percent less than boomers did at the same stage of life despite a better education, according to a new analysis by the Federal Reserve. This lack of personal capital, coupled with the baggage of student loans, makes the idea of owning a home unthinkable. However, with strategic placements and attractive price points, Tembo homes fill the needs of this group.



REO Town is on a hot streak, and the thought of living closer to the emerging action is something that has passed through the minds of tenants and residents alike, each optimistic in their abilities to capitalize on what many in the region are calling the next Old Town.

However, Tembo homes aren't entering the area with the objective of redeveloping the region by adding luxurious, expensive housing options or cleaning its slate to make room for more areas of commerce; instead, they're taking a strategic perspective that will help to reinforce the defining features of the area when executed.

"Smart growth is about being dynamic: you deal with people, and as people's lives change, the way we interact with spaces change," said Pons-Shultz. "As we evolve, our relationships, the way we live, how we live evolves. Anyone putting a product out needs to be constantly aware of that evolving market. People want a home that mirrors their values and mirrors their lifestyle."

The goal is to become part of the heritage and assist in the creation of the future, not leave the past in the rearview as developers often do with aging neighborhoods. Through smart growth tactics, a fundamental moral code for Forsberg, the group is not only bringing new light to the regions of yesterday, they are doing so with a minimized footprint. Modern efficiency-based installations throughout each home ensures that the energy needed for the homes to function isn't just practical, but beneficial to the environment. It comes as no surprise to learn that staples in green development, such as LEAD certification and Energy Star accessories, laid the foundation of aspirations for these buildings.

"We worked with an energy efficiency company throughout the build process, taking design recommendations to ensure that the utility costs to operate these homes would be minimal," said Pons-Schultz. "However, that doesn't mean we had to cut back on features; the homes will include a washer and dryer, and certain models will include a dishwasher as well."

While Tembo homes are great for the region, the question remains: Who would be interested, and why are they interested? Forsberg has identified a subset of the population that desires minimalistic, modern housing units at an attainable price. Coming in at anywhere between \$600-\$850 a month, and utilities estimated at \$1,300 annually, these new options are viable for recent graduates, frequent travelers or anyone with the desire to situate their personal carbon footprint in line with Forsberg's efforts.



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Each home is fitted with the essentials: a living room, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. Easily suitable for a pair of residents, there is a generous amount of interior storage thanks to a loft unit, and the exterior has its perks too, thanks to a large front patio for sitting and a separate concrete patio in the back. When touring the unit, it's easy to imagine yourself capitalizing on these amenities.

Tembo houses aren't for everyone, and they're not meant to be. Residents of the homes aren't being asked to abandon all their personal possessions, but it doesn't hurt to pack light. These structures have managed to find a perfect balance between minimalism and comfortability. With the enticement of sleek design and lower energy bills, the compromise is nothing to laugh at. Homes will range in size and are expected to differ slightly by location, but each home will aim to provide the outlined inclusions.

Over the next few years, Forsberg will be exploring more options in hopes of creating a viable solution for the needs of many. Tembo homes don't fit the mold of what you'd come to expect from a rental property, but the curiosity and adventure that comes along with being a tenant is worth it. A smaller home doesn't mean a smaller lifestyle; it means bigger opportunities.



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## TINY VILLAGE TO HELP THE HOMELESS CLOSE TO OPENING DOORS

📅 DECEMBER 6, 2022   ■ EASTERN WISCONSIN NETWORK, MY NEIGHBOR

Jake's Network of Hope partners with other 501c3 nonprofits, school-based and faith-based groups who directly serve vulnerable people in our communities. This means our work supports diverse community needs, from foster care to after school programs, family needs and domestic abuse

shelters, refugee work, poverty support, health programs and more. These collaborations mean partners can re-allocate time and money to instead focusing on their programs, while meeting human needs in the community.

We want to highlight the many ways our partners are making a difference for those most vulnerable individuals, many of whom are neighbors, peers, co-workers or connected to us in unknown ways. Poverty is more commonplace than we often think, and financial strain can often be situational and temporary. Our work ensures every individual experiencing hardship can still have their basic needs cared for and feel a sense of self worth. Explore the stories of all 12 of our 200+ community partners by visiting [this link](#).



A collaborative effort to give homeless Oshkosh families a safe shelter and fresh start will open its doors to 8 families in the New Year.

The Oshkosh Kids Foundation (OKF) has teamed up with 17 local community partners to introduce the Tiny House Village – Jake’s Network of Hope is thrilled to be one of these community partners!

The Tiny House Village provides affordable, short-term housing for families while they learn life, financial, and home management skills. Jake’s is providing goods to furnish each home – such as bedding, small kitchen equipment, dining ware, bathroom needs, and so forth – a partnership that has greatly helped reduce the project’s growing budget – according to Julie Dumke, Co-Founder, and Executive Director of OKF.

“We love Jakes, we’re super excited about the group staging our houses – all the items that Jake’s is providing are going to make it a home,” she said.

As of early December, the village’s community center is complete and ready for the organization to start furnishing and “moving in.” The first couple of houses are expected to be move-in ready in the next couple weeks, with doors opening to 8 families just after the New Year, Julie said.

Families are referred by school social workers, Winnebago County social workers and the Christine Anne Center. The families who are ultimately selected for the program are those who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness and are also working hard to overcome their situation. The Tiny

Homes village goal is to give these families time to get back on their feet and re-establish financial security while offering a fresh start.



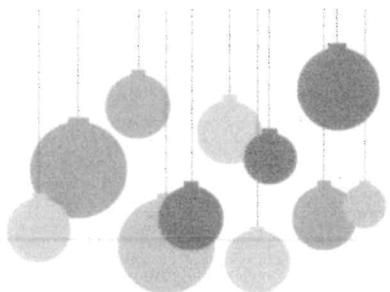
There are 100 families on a waitlist for

programs that could ultimately refer to the Tiny Homes, showcasing just how desperate the need in the area is; Jule said the group hopes to have 16 homes available by the end of January and 32 by the end of June. The homes use solar power panels to reduce tenant costs, and the village will provide internet; the only utility residents will pay is water.

“These people, we’re getting them stabilized and then giving them hope and dignity and excitement about a brand new house with brand new stuff – and they can start over,” Julie said. The organization will provide each family a picture frame with a family photo upon move in.

**Donate directly to this project here.**

Donate to Jake’s general operations to support this and other partnerships by visiting our 12 Partners campaign. Donations provide hygiene products and other basic needs to community members in need.



WILL YOU CONSIDER JOINING OUR COLLABORATION WITH A GIFT TO SUPPORT OUR PROGRAMS?



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#### NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

#### ABOUT

Jake's Network of Hope is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that believes in a world where every human feels worthy. This empowers individuals to live their best lives, creating full and active communities. Our programs provide resources that fulfill various human needs: basic, social, emotional and educational.

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