



Heartland
HOUSED

Heartland HOUSED Update
City Council
Tuesday, August 20

Heartland HOUSED was established in 2022 to serve as the backbone organization tasked with developing strategy, supporting implementation activities, and facilitating the collaborative work of the Heartland Continuum of Care with the purpose of effectively addressing homelessness in Springfield & Sangamon County. This early action step flowing from Springfield & Sangamon County's 2022-2028 Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness is a key foundational component of our community reaching the goals we have set. In 2024, Heartland HOUSED became the Lead Agency of the Heartland Continuum of Care and now supports five full time staff with an additional staff person expected to join in September. City of Springfield annual support (\$250,000) is matched by Sangamon County (\$250,000) and Capital Township (\$125,000). Additional funding for the organization comes through HUD grants and other grants Heartland HOUSED applies for.

2024 Highlights So Far

100 Day Challenge on Unsheltered Homelessness

Heartland HOUSED & Heartland Continuum of Care partners concluded a 100-Day Challenge focused on better understanding and addressing the challenges connected to unsheltered homelessness in May. Cohorts in Springfield, Rockford, suburban Cook County and Will County participated in the challenge with technical support from RE!INSTITUTE and the Supportive Housing Providers Association. HCoC efforts saw 29 individuals with a history of unsheltered homelessness end their homelessness and enter supportive housing in 100 days. During this same time period, 45 households exited homelessness and entered permanent housing supported by HCoC organizations. You can read more about the 100 Day Challenge in this Illinois Times article.

Community Solutions Built for Zero Technical Assistance

We are working with Community Solutions and their Built for Zero Technical Assistance team to reach Quality Data metrics, develop a By Names List of all people experiencing homelessness in the community, and to develop goals for reaching functional zero for different populations groups (Veterans, Chronically homeless, etc...). As part of the process we are working with partners to increase data collection (specifically outreach) and to improve the quality of data collected (service providers). The data for this process will also be used for a community data dashboard that will be publicly available and show inflow into the homelessness system and exits to permanent housing and other destinations.

Outreach Expansion is a crucial part of making progress in the development of our By Names List and connecting households with available services. The HCoC Street Outreach Task Group meets every other week for case conferencing with an emphasis on households that are unsheltered. The 100 Day Challenge on Unsheltered Homelessness highlighted opportunities and needs around Street Outreach..

- Opportunities include strengthening partnerships and increasing data collection. Washington Street Mission and Phoenix Center have taken significant steps that will have an impact on Street Outreach Data. We are still working with SPD's SEED initiative to help them better collaborate through data sharing and integration in HMIS.
- Needs are currently focused on Street Outreach staff and considerations for bringing devoted Street Outreach staff onto the Heartland HOUSED team.

Lived Experience Advisory Board

Regular focus groups began last year to provide opportunities for people experiencing homelessness to share about their experiences, barriers they encounter, and ideas for improvements. This Spring, the Heartland HOUSED Lived Experience Advisory Board was formally established. The board meets twice a month to plan events, review policy changes, address concerns, and advocate for system improvement. Participants are compensated for their time and efforts through Heartland HOUSED.

Housing Helpline

We recently launched the Housing Helpline and are preparing for the full public launch of the program. Individuals facing housing instability or homelessness can now call the Housing Helpline at 217-803-5235 to find out about available resources in the community they are eligible for and receive a direct referral. The Helpline is primarily focused on connection to homelessness prevention and rental assistance resources but can also provide support navigating the Coordinated Entry process and provide information on emergency shelters. The Helpline currently operates Monday to Friday from 9 to 4 PM.

Supportive Housing Learning Labs & Task Group Launch

Heartland HOUSED partnered with the Corporation for Supportive Housing to provide four full day trainings for community case managers and other front line staff. Following our Supportive Housing Learning Lab series, we launched the Supportive Housing Task Group which provides support, training, and fosters idea and resource sharing among housing case workers in agencies throughout the Continuum.

Old Towne Collaboration with the City of Springfield

Heartland HOUSED and HCoC partners provided assistance to 36 households as they left the Old Towne apartments and found new places to live. We advocated for an increase in Homelessness Prevention funds from the State of Illinois after this experience and in FY25

Additional Projects and Ongoing Efforts

- **New Website and Phone Application** - We launched a new website with support of the LRS Foundation. We are working to develop a Phone App with additional grant funding to support a phone app that will be used by Street Outreach workers and the community to see our list of community housing resources.
- **New Community Ambassador Training** - this training is designed to orient the community to the work of the Heartland Continuum of Care. You can take the training here.
- **Veterans Homelessness Challenge Preparation** - We recently met with the Veteran's Assistance Commission, VA, and Supportive Services for Veteran Families to begin laying the groundwork for a 50 day Challenge on Veteran Homelessness that we anticipate beginning after Veteran's Day. The goal will be develop a needs assessment, strategy, and target date for reaching functional zero for veterans experiencing homelessness.
- **Medical Respite Care** - We are continuing to work with healthcare and shelter partners to fully launch a medical respite care program that will provide support for people without housing who are exiting the hospital and need space and care to assist in recovery.
- **Coordinated Entry** - Our Coordinated Entry System is a significant part of our system and we are addressing growing pains. Over the past years we have mandated funded agencies to have two trained assessors on staff. We are currently working to improve the quantity and quality of assessments being done to improve connectivity to housing opportunities.
- **Youth Homelessness efforts** - Our Youth Homelessness Task Group is preparing for a youth homelessness count in Spring of 2025. We are currently applying for HUD's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Grant that would fund coordination efforts and make funding available for organizations to expand housing services focused on youth.



HOME Illinois Summit

The State of Illinois' Office to Prevent and End Homelessness held their annual Home IL Summit in Springfield on June 4th and 5th. Continuums, partners, State Agencies, and agency staff from across the state gathered for two days of presentations, training, and networking. We were excited to see many partners from the Heartland Continuum participate in the summit and take advantage of the summit's close proximity. A few takeaways:



- Josh Sabo represented our community on two panels, “Leveraging Dynamic, Real-time Homelessness Data to Enable System Performance Improvement” with Community Solutions and “Illinois Medical Respite Capacity Building Initiative” with the Illinois Public Health Institute
- The State of Illinois' commissioned report is a very important read: “[Black Homelessness in Illinois: Structural Drivers of Inequality.](#)” We are looking into opportunities to bring a presentation of the report to Springfield.
- Another report on Health and Mortality for Homeless Individuals was presented on and will be released soon. The report has significant ramifications for healthcare partnerships, medical respite, and other service delivery efforts.

Supportive Housing Task Group Launch

Following our Supportive Housing Learning Lab series, we launched the Supportive Housing Task Group which provides support, training, and fosters idea and resource sharing among housing case workers in agencies throughout the Continuum. The first meeting was held at Salvation Army in June.

Community Engagement

- Our team had a table at the Juneteenth celebration.
- Masonic Central Lodge Number 3 held an Outreach event in partnership with SPD that we participated in and passed out outreach supplies.



System Improvement Efforts

- Community Solutions / Built for Zero Quality Data Initiative - efforts continue to reach the Quality Data benchmark. This is a big emphasis for the HCoC now. We are working with partners to increase data collection (specifically outreach) and to improve the quality of data collected (service providers). The July HCoC General Membership meeting included a 30-minute training from the Technical Assistance Collaborative on the importance of quality data and strategies to improve data collection. Data dashboard development is a part of this work.
- Veterans Homelessness Challenge Preparation - We recently met with the Veteran's Assistance Commission, VA, and Supportive Services for Veteran Families to begin laying the groundwork for a 50 day Challenge on Veteran Homelessness that we anticipate beginning after Veteran's Day. The goal will be develop a needs assessment, strategy, and target date for reaching functional zero for veterans experiencing homelessness.
- Coordinated Entry System is a significant part of our system and we are addressing growing pains. Over the past years we have mandated funded agencies to have two trained assessors on staff. We are currently working to improve the quantity and quality of assessments being done to improve connectivity to housing opportunities.

Outreach Expansion

The 100 Day Challenge on Unsheltered Homelessness highlighted opportunities and needs around Street Outreach.

- Opportunities include strengthening partnerships and increasing data collection. Washington Street Mission and Phoenix Center have taken significant steps that will have an impact on Street Outreach Data. We are still working with SPD's SEED initiative to help them better collaborate through data sharing and integration in HMIS.
- Needs are currently focused on Street Outreach staff and considerations for bringing devoted SO staff onto the Heartland HOUSED team.

Projects and Ongoing Efforts

- Heartland HOUSED Audit moving forward with Eck, Schafer, and Punke.
- We are working with a potential System Support Specialist candidate.
- Efforts ongoing to develop the HMIS side of the Heartland Housing Help Line, we have soft launched the program at this time.
- You can preview [our new website here](#). Final edits are being made to launch. We have entered into an agreement with LRS on the development of a phone application to support Outreach efforts and Continuum communication.
- Medical Respite - the IPHI grant spend down happened in June, work shifting now to policy, partnership, and staffing.



Community Education

Josh Sabo has had opportunities to share about the work of Heartland HOUSED and the Heartland Continuum of Care with several community partners and interested groups:

- April 8 - Sangamon County Board Meeting Presentation
- April 10 - UIS Social Work Cohort taught by Dr. Eric Hadley-Ives
- May 1 - SIU School of Medicine Grand Rounds

Continuum of Care Capacity Building

- Our final two Supportive Housing Learning Labs were held in April and May with the Corporation of Supportive Housing providing full day trainings on best practices for case management to local partners. Each lab had between 20 and 30 participants. Out of these Learning Labs we are launching a new Supportive Housing Task Group where we will provide ongoing training and support for case management staff across the HCoC.



Old Towne Collaboration

- HCoC partners provided assistance to 36 households as they left the Old Towne apartments and found new places to live. Our new Housing Problem Solving Specialist, Shymeka Kerr, did a great job helping to answer resident's questions and help them connect to agencies that could help.

Advocacy

- Josh got the opportunity to spend a day at the IL State Capital in April with local partners and the Supportive Housing Provider's Association to talk about the impact state funding has had on our community.



- In May, Josh joined the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce's DC Fly-in to meet with our U.S. Congress Representatives. Sangamon County Chairman Andy Van Meter and Josh also met with Norm Suchar, Director of HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, to discuss the work that has taken place in our community since 2019.



Projects and Ongoing Efforts

- The State of Illinois FY25 Emergency Solutions Grant and Homelessness Prevention grants were allocated through the Heartland Continuum of Care Board. The HCoC Homelessness Prevention Grant increased to \$400,000 this year, up from \$89,000 in FY22.
- The 100 Day Challenge to Address Unsheltered Homelessness ended in late May with a Sustainability Summit in Joliet. More details in IT Article.
- Heartland HOUSED Audit. We have been in talks with Eck, Schafer, and Punke and should know more soon about timetable for audit completion.
- System Support Specialist position posted this week.
- Efforts ongoing to develop the HMIS side of the Heartland Housing Help Line, we have soft launched the program at this time.
- Website development progress and App development exploration.

June 3rd Illinois Times Article written by Josh Sabo

<https://www.illinoistimes.com/arts-culture/100-day-challenge-results-in-29-entering-supportive-housing-18596398>

100 Day Challenge Focused on Unsheltered Homelessness Results in Twenty-Nine People Entering Supportive Housing

Is it possible to support individuals who have experienced years of homelessness in connecting to permanent housing opportunities? What about those who are reluctant to engage services for a variety of reasons and are deemed to be the hardest to house?

A recent Heartland Continuum of Care (HCoC) effort saw twenty-nine individuals with a history of unsheltered homelessness end their homelessness and enter supportive housing in 100 days. During this same time period a total of forty-five households exited homelessness and entered permanent housing supported by HCoC organizations.

Heartland Continuum of Care partners concluded a 100-Day Challenge focused on better understanding and addressing the challenges connected to unsheltered homelessness on May 22nd. Cohorts in Springfield, Rockford, Suburban Cook County, and Will County participated in the challenge with technical support from RE!INSTITUTE and the Supportive Housing Providers Association. The initiative was made possible through the State of Illinois' Office to Prevent and End Homelessness.

The effort kicked off in February with twelve people from Heartland HOUSED, Helping Hands, Washington Street Mission, Memorial Behavioral Health, SIU, volunteer outreach efforts, and local leaders with lived experience attended a two-day summit in Joliet. The team of partners coordinated efforts through weekly meetings and integration with ongoing HCoC Task Groups focused on Street Outreach, Coordinated Entry, and Supportive Housing.

There are many complex factors that contribute to people in our community living without shelter. Strategies to effectively connect people who are unsheltered to resources require consistent coordinated outreach, relationship and trust building, strong collaboration across partners, and access to services necessary to provide complex care. Connected to this are the Heartland Continuum of Care's efforts to build and maintain a by-name list of all people experiencing homelessness in Sangamon County.

Assessing existing community efforts, identifying gaps in service, and experimenting with solutions were at the core of the 100 Day Challenge goals. During the challenge, local organizers aimed to work with 100 people experiencing unsheltered homelessness or with a history of unsheltered homelessness with the goal of helping ninety percent access the HCoC Coordinated Entry System and fifteen percent entering supportive housing during the challenge. An additional goal was to support twenty-five percent of those engaged in accessing complex care services to address physical and mental health care, psychiatric care, and substance use and harm reduction services.

Innovation and experimentation were keys to making progress and improving on existing Street Outreach efforts. Our community is fortunate to have community initiatives like Springfield Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team, the Springfield Empower Equip and Deflect program, and volunteer outreach efforts in the community. The challenge is to ensure all these efforts work hand-in-hand to provide housing focused services and referrals necessary to assist people in ending their homelessness.

During the 100 Day Challenge, collaboration across these efforts was improved through new Outreach training resources, the development of an Outreach Map, and an experimental Outreach Tool designed for ease of use for volunteers to share information and make referrals to services. Another goal was to incorporate people with lived experience of homelessness in outreach efforts. Heartland HOUSED leads regular outreach outings and compensates people with lived experience for their participation in street outreach.

At the end of the challenge, twenty-nine individuals entered housing opportunities paired with rental subsidy support and case management services that work to help people stabilize in housing, increase their income, and connect to any community based services that are needed. Sixty-three individuals completed Coordinated Entry assessments that put them on the pathway to supportive housing in our community. Partners involved in the effort celebrated seeing people they have engaged with, in some cases for more than five years, accept supportive housing opportunities and enter into their own apartments.

The challenge ahead is how to sustain progress made while continuing growth and innovation. A significant part of the success made during the challenge was due to growth in the number of supportive housing opportunities available in our community, funding is needed to continue growth in local Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing programs so more households can exit homelessness through these programs. While Street Outreach efforts have improved in our community, there is a need for additional devoted Street Outreach staff to assist in collaborative efforts. Availability of complex care services to provide ongoing support for people who are in supportive housing programs continues to be a need identified by local case managers working to help households achieve stability in permanent housing.

Heartland HOUSED and the Heartland Continuum of Care continuously strive to make progress on Springfield and Sangamon County's 2022-2028 Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness. The 100 Day Challenge has accelerated progress in several areas to that end while also identifying challenges and gaps where improvements must be made so our community can continue building a more effective and equitable system to functionally end homelessness in our community.



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February/March 2024
Heartland HOUSED Update



Late January/February

+ We were invited to begin writing regular columns for the Illinois Times. You can view the [first one here](#).

NEWS & OPINION | FOOD & DRINK | MUSIC | ARTS & CULTURE | CALENDAR | OBITUARIES

Arts & Culture » Community & Lifestyle

January 30, 2024

Organizations work to reach “functional zero” homelessness by 2028

By Josh Sabo

+ Heartland HOUSED received 501(c)3 status.

+ Shymeka Kerr joined our team as the Heartland HOUSING Helpline Specialist!

+ Results Received from HUD CoC Competition:

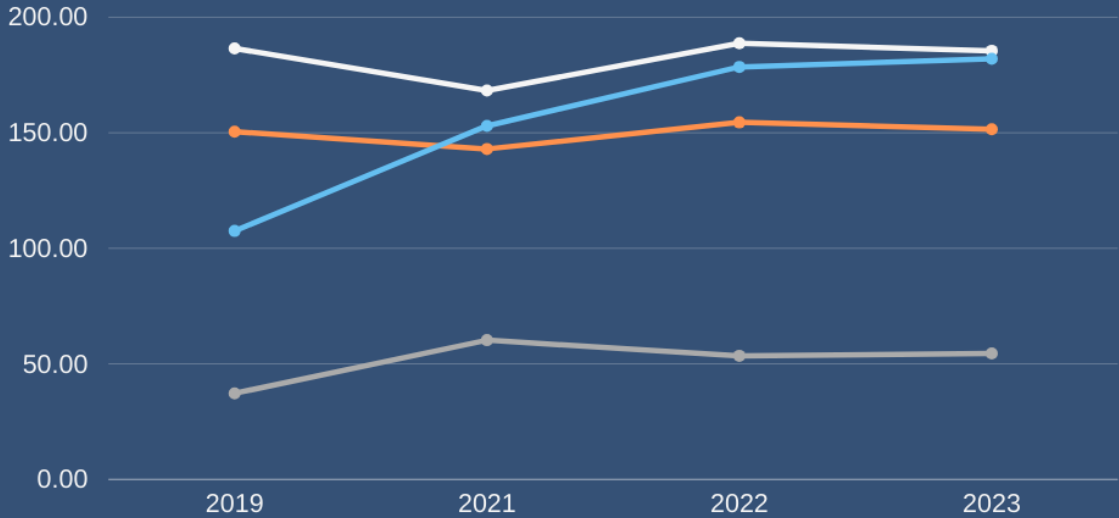
Over the past decade, the Springfield and Sangamon County community has received the lowest amount of U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding to address homelessness among Continuums of Care in the State of Illinois. HUD utilizes an annual Continuum of Care competition and application process to determine the amount of funding Continuums receive. “HUD’s Continuum of Care program is the backbone federal program supporting community homelessness response systems across the country, providing grants to nonprofit providers, States, Indian Tribes, and local governments for permanent and short-term housing assistance, supportive services, planning, data, and other costs.” Communities that score well in the competition have the opportunity to earn new project funding while lower scoring communities risk losing funding for projects.

HUD funding for Springfield and Sangamon County reached the peak of \$656,274 in 2012 before declining to \$402,128 in 2019.

- Our score from the latest HUD funding competition was 3.5 points behind the highest scoring Continuum in the country and 30.5 points ahead of the median score

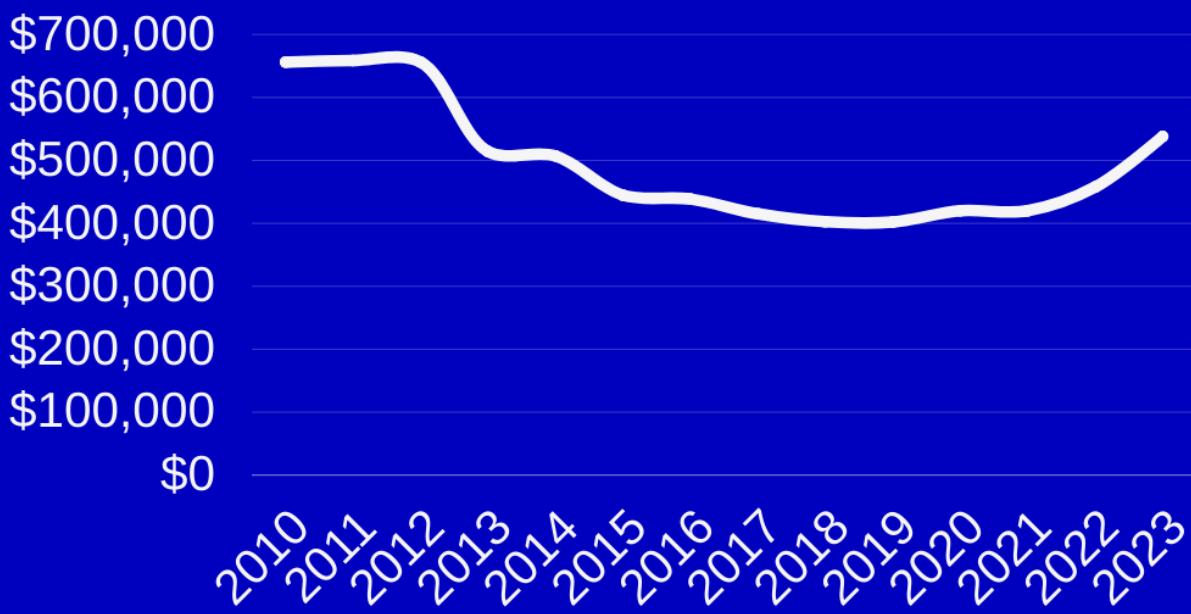
- Our HUD funding increased by \$80,477 this year. It was the highest percentage increase of any Continuum in Illinois. This brings our funding to \$538,136 an over 33% increase from where we were in 2019.

CONTINUUM OF CARE COMPETITION SCORES



Highest Score for any COC
 Median Score for any COC
Heartland Continuum of Care Score
 Lowest Score for any COC

HEARTLAND COC HUD FUNDING



+ Hosted the first of 4 Supportive Housing Learning Labs with the Corporation of Supportive Housing with the goal of better equipping local case managers and housing organizations. We had over 25 attendees. Our second event was held in March with similar attendance.



+ In February, Heartland Continuum of Care partners began a 100 Day Challenge with technical support from RE!NSTITUTE with the aim of better understanding and addressing the challenges connected to unsheltered homelessness in our community. While there are many complex factors that contribute to people in our community living without shelter, we know that strategies to effectively connect people who are unsheltered to resources require consistent, coordinated outreach, relationship building and trust, and strong collaboration across partners.

On February 6th and 7th, twelve people from Heartland HOUSED, Helping Hands, Washington Street Mission, Memorial Behavioral Health, SIU, volunteer outreach efforts, and local leaders with lived experience attended a two-day summit in Joliet along with cohorts from Rockford, Suburban Cook County, and Will County to plan and

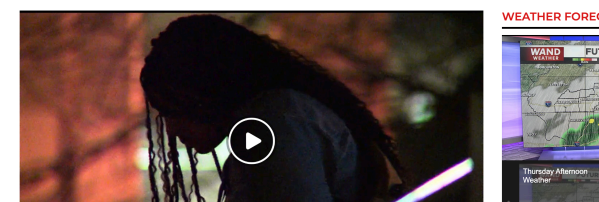
set goals for the challenge. For the 100 Days from February into May, community partners are working to build on previous community efforts to develop a by-names-list of all people experiencing homelessness in Springfield and Sangamon County and creating new tools to be implemented locally to improve data collection and success of referrals. These efforts will help to build on community initiatives like Springfield Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team, the Springfield Empower Equip and Deflect program, and other existing outreach efforts in the community.



- + Madeline Boner was offered a new position in the community, she gave us notice with March 1st being her final day with Heartland HOUSED.
- + We applied for \$347,500 from HUD in Youth Homelessness System Improvement grant funding. The goal is plan around the challenge of youth homelessness, conduct a youth specific count, create community training, and conduct a full youth homeless needs assessment if awarded. The grant request also included funding for a staff position at Heartland HOUSED, the Youth Homelessness System Coordinator.
- + We conducted our annual Point-in-Time Count on February 26th. [WAND ran a story on it here.](#)
- + Work continues on Quality Data technical assistance with Built for Zero/Community Solutions. Data Dashboards are being troubleshot now with anticipated April launch at this point.



FEATURED
Volunteers complete point-in-time count to gauge homelessness in Sangamon Co.
Carlee Bronkema Feb 27, 2024 Updated Feb 27, 2024





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Heartland HOUSED: Springfield and Sangamon County's Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness 2023 Annual Report with 2024 Strategic Emphasis

STRATEGY 1: Create safe, effective housing opportunities

1. Create a Housing Task Force to support creation of homeless housing, advocate for funding for housing, and create a needs assessment/plan for government funding sources.

- The Housing Task Force has been established and is meeting bi-monthly. The focus for 2024 is adding additional members to the task force, supporting capacity building initiatives that will lead to more developers working to create affordable housing in Sangamon County, and driving community efforts to better understand local housing stock (with an emphasis on rental units) and quality of available housing.
- HCoC Housing Navigation services recruited 11 new landlords to work with Supportive Housing programs, developed partnership with State of IL's SRN Program (State Referral Network), fostered strong connection between the HCoC and the Springfield Housing Authority, and administered the Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund.
- Springfield Housing Authority created plan to support the HCoC and create new housing pathways through a Moving On Program and new vouchers through Move to Work Program.
- In 2023, Heartland HOUSED and the Heartland Continuum of Care (HCoC) have been supporting developers and organizations working to pursue Illinois Department of Housing Authority (IDHA) Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) funding. One developer applied in the 2024 IHDA PSH grant cycle for a new PSH development in Springfield.
- In November of 2023, Park Ave Apartments were opened and will provide housing for 33 people through the Heartland Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry System. This development was funded through the IHDA PSH grant and City of Springfield Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnership Program.

2. Create 765 Permanent Housing Opportunities.

The goal in 2023 was to create 100 new Rapid Rehousing (RRH) opportunities and 100 new Permanent Supportive Housing PSH opportunities. Our community made notable progress in this area, funding was allocated through the Heartland Continuum of Care to create:

98 New Units of RRH

42 New Units of PSH

- **State Illinois Department of Human Services Continuum of Care funding:** will create 27 new units of PSH, 53 new units of long-term RRH
- **Emergency Solutions Grant:** 15 long-term RRH opportunities
- **Emergency Food and Shelter Program:** piloted short-term RRH and created 20 housing opportunities
- **Sangamon County Community Resources:** supported 10 RRH opportunities
- **HUD Funding** - renewal units/already existing (54 PSH, 5 long-term RRH, already existing), 2 new PSH units. New HUD CoC Funding application included 6 new units of PSH, 6 new units of RRH. We will learn if we receive this funding in 2024.
- **EHV** - 37 households were helped to leave PSH and other programs in the past 18 months, continuing a priority for vouchers in this neighborhood would greatly expand PSH capacity.

Anticipated housing opportunities in 2024:

- **SIU and Helping Hands are partnering on a program with funding from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority allocated through the Springfield Police Department to create a FUSE (Frequent Users of Systems Engagement) program.** This partnership will create 15 PSH opportunities.
- **City of Springfield HOME-ARP Funding** - could create 50 new units of PSH beginning in Spring of 2024.
- **Springfield Housing Authority Move to Work Initiative** could create 40 new housing voucher opportunities for people exiting homelessness and a new Moving On initiative will create anew pathway for households in Permanent Supportive Housing programs to exit the program to housing stability through a housing voucher.

3. Build capacity in the community to build, rehabilitate, and provide housing to homeless and at-risk populations.

Relationships with Windsor Development led to the completion of one PSH project with another application being submitted in the next IHDA PSH round. The Housing Task Force hopes to support further development capacity and Heartland HOUSED staff will work to support other developers interested in developing housing units for people exiting homelessness.

4. Ensure permanent housing projects are fully and sustainably funded, including funding for operations and supportive services that support people experiencing homelessness to maintain housing.

- The HCoC has prioritized PSH and RRH in all funding opportunities while working with other funders like United Way to encourage preferences for these programs to increase stability of funding.
- In 2024, Heartland HOUSED will receive 501(c)3 status and begin planning additional fundraising to address needs for flexible funds and funding gaps to reach housing goals.

STRATEGY 1 - 2024 STRATEGIC FOCUS ACTION STEPS

- **Develop deeper understanding in the community around quality and availability of rental housing stock and conduct a needs assessment.**
- **Recruit 10 new landlords to work with HCoC partner agencies' supportive housing programs.**
- **Recruit and support capacity development initiatives for those interested in developing units of housing including training and pursuing Technical Assistance.**
- **Develop fundraising initiative to provide funding to create additional PSH and RRH opportunities including rental subsidy and case management costs.**

STRATEGY 2: Improve the effectiveness of the homeless system.

1. Develop practices to identify and link unsheltered Sangamon County residents to crisis and permanent housing and other needed resources.

- The Street Outreach Task Force Group meets bi-weekly to update the by-names list and the group has been having consistent monthly outreach outings.
- Heartland HOUSED staff have worked to partner and integrate community outreach efforts into system outreach efforts by outreaching with the St. Al's Homeless Ministry every other weekend.
- Springfield Police Department is piloting an outreach initiative called SEED (Springfield, Empower, Equip, and Deflect) that only takes referrals from officers at this point, there are hopes to expand eventually to be able to take referrals directly from the community members. Through the SEED initiative, outreach specialists will continuously engage individuals to try to get them connected to services and to get services delivered to them. Heartland HOUSED staff serve on the SEED leadership team to ensure efforts are integrated into the homelessness system.

- Coordinated Entry training has been expanded and made more accessible so more people conducting outreach are able to create access to our Coordinated Entry list.
- A Street Outreach Community Standards draft has been completed.
- The HCoC allocated funding to Helping Hands for outreach staff. Job descriptions for outreach staff have been posted and Helping Hands is working on hiring staff.
- Heartland HOUSED and the HCoC began work with Community Solutions (the same organization that helped Rockford reach functional zero homelessness for chronically homeless and veteran populations) on an 18-month technical assistance process that will assist us in the development of a quality By-Names-List of all persons experiencing homelessness in Springfield/Sangamon County.
- Heartland HOUSED and the HCoC began work with RE!NSTITUTE to plan a 100-Day Challenge in the first Quarter of 2024 aimed at improving how the system responds to unsheltered homelessness.

2. Build diversion strategies and resources and link them to existing programs to support returning households to housing immediately.

- A Housing Problem-solving policy on the HCOC level has been created, which includes diversion and homelessness prevention and the housing problem-solving flexible fund. We received a \$50,000 grant from Aetna and the goal is to use that fund to support diversion and rapid exit with an emphasis on persons who can not access shelter.
- Shelter Diversion funding was included in the IDHS CoC funding and allocated to Helping Hands, Contact Ministry, and Phoenix Center.

3. Create stable, effective, community-wide crisis housing that serves all homeless subpopulations and supports movement into housing.

Helping Hands Shelter is planning to open on January 2nd in their new facility that will include 140 beds (30 designated for women), 24-hour care, two health clinic spaces, and close integration with housing-focused services. Additionally, grant funding has been received to pilot a Medical Respite Care program within the shelter.

4. Ensure housing-focused day services are available to ensure safety, protection from inclement weather, and access to referrals, services, and support.

Availability of day services has increased within the last year with Helping Hands North providing day services and being open 24/7 and Washington Street Mission expanded their hours. The new Helping Hands facility will further address this need moving forward.

5. Develop community-wide standards for community programs addressing homelessness. Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, and Permanent Supportive Housing Community Standards have been drafted and will be voted on by the HCoC Board in 2024.

6. Community-wide, strategically focus and prioritize support for recently housed individuals to ensure housing stability.

- Supportive Housing Learning Labs have been planned in 2024 to increase training opportunities for service providers. Four different Learning Labs will be held. The first one is in January it is based on the Standards of Quality Supportive Housing, which strives to build the capacity of the supportive housing industry to create and operate high-quality, effective, and sustainable housing units. The training will provide definitions, outcomes, and components that comprise a quality project. Woven through the session content we will help participants to understand the implications of racial disparities and institutional barriers that impact housing for persons facing challenges of homelessness, disabilities, and poverty.
- Supportive Housing task group will be relaunched in 2024 through the Supportive Housing Learning Labs. This group will be a space to hear from direct service providers about what challenges they are experiencing. This group will identify additional supportive services needed in the community such as mental health, recovery, and behavioral health services, and report needs for training and additional services to the HCoC Board.

STRATEGY 2 - 2024 STRATEGIC FOCUS ACTION STEPS

- **Reaching the Quality Data standard through Community Solutions and Built for Zero and developing a By-Names-List of all persons experiencing homelessness in Springfield and Sangamon County**
- **Increase the number of Street Outreach staff in the community and the integration of Street Outreach efforts in the HCoC Homeless Management Information System**
- **Identify additional improvements necessary to improve the system through**
- **RE!NSTITUTE 100-Day Challenge**
- **Utilize HOME-ARP Funding to Conduct a Housing Surge for Chronically homeless households**
- **Increase the level of training and support for case managers and organizations providing Supportive Housing**
- **Train Organizations, Funders, and the Community on HCoC Community Standards**
- **Expand the availability of Mental Health and behavioral health services that support both the Emergency Shelter System and those placed in housing opportunities**
- **Explore the possibility of establishing a 708 board (Community Mental Health Board) for the purposes of planning and funding mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services.**

STRATEGY 3: Coordinate with other systems of care to reduce homelessness.

Cross System

1. Create systems to support cross-system data sharing including expanding HMIS usage, data exchange, and easily accessible dashboard to reduce duplication of services across full community, while protecting individual privacy.

Heartland HOUSED staff worked with the Cambridge Coalition to develop a plan for a Technical Assistance program that could help bring the Cambridge model to Springfield/Sangamon County in the future if funded.

2. Improve and expand cross-system service coordination and referrals to be more transparent and effective and to reduce duplication.

The development of the Sangamon County Re-Entry Council and the Discharge Planning/Complex Care Task Group has created avenues to network partners, provide education, and work toward improving referrals.

3. Improve access to treatment and services system-wide by restructuring access and program requirements to reduce barriers (including transportation), implement best practices, and ensure welcoming, culturally specific, trauma-informed services.

Inadequate community services for treatment, psychiatric, and mental health services are frequently elevated as highest priority challenges for service providers. Heartland HOUSED is leading an effort to explore the process and feasibility of bringing a 708/Community Mental Health board to the community.

Healthcare

4. Build on coordinated entry system to improve navigation and coordination of the homeless and health care systems of care by individuals experiencing homelessness.

Expanded Coordinated Entry training and education will improve the ability of healthcare and other partners to help people access Coordinated Entry.

5. Improve access to dental health care services for people experiencing homelessness.

Central Counties Health Centers Dental clinic helps to provide dental services for people experiencing homelessness.

6. Improve discharge planning practices, ensuring access to medicine and appropriate supports for people experiencing homelessness, and specifically, create 10 units bridge housing with integrated case management for those discharged from hospitals and treatment facilities to ensure stability during transition to housing.

- The newly formed Discharge Planning/Complex Care Task Group has worked to help partners from the Healthcare Community and those that provide Homeless Services identify needs, challenges, and opportunities for better coordination of discharge planning.
- Heartland HOUSED received grants through the Illinois Public Health Institute to help develop a Medical Respite Care pilot program with plans to launch in Quarter One of 2024 in partnership with Helping Hands.

Public Safety System

7. Engaging all facets of the criminal legal system and community supports, improve discharge planning to ensure people exiting public safety system have housing access and support.

Heartland HOUSED supports the Sangamon County Re-Entry Council that has created a resource guide for returning citizens. The Sangamon County Re-Entry Council works to recruit and engage partners and stakeholders from all facets of the criminal legal system.

8. Continue to provide clinical services for persons experiencing homelessness that coordinate with law enforcement and court services to increase engagement and collaboration with new and existing partners.

Helping Hands facilitates a Case Conferencing effort in collaboration with Sangamon County Problem Solving Courts, probation, and community partners to collaborate to help individuals access services and stable housing.

9. Improve access to criminal legal system diversion court programs for people experiencing homelessness, including by expanding programs, destigmatizing programs, and focusing engagement on underserved populations.

10. Improve access to detox beds and other community resources to avoid criminal legal system involvement.

Community efforts like the Sangamon County Re-Entry Council continue to work to make progress on this action step.

Workforce Development

- 11. Identify and engage employers to hire and train people experiencing homelessness.**
- 12. Create resources to address system gaps for populations that experience economic disparities in this community, including people who have disabilities, who are Black, or who are seniors.**
- 13. Provide case management support to employers and employees who are currently or formerly homeless to improve relationships and placement success.**
- 14. Leverage supported employment programs and resources designed for the specific challenges people experiencing homelessness may experience, which may include, for example, shelter or housing, identification document access, transportation, childcare, tools/ uniform stipends, literacy education, and GED programs.**
- 15. Create Individualized Placement Support (IPS) for employment for individuals with high needs or barriers.**

A Workforce Development Task Group will be created in 2024 to make progress on these initiatives.

STRATEGY 3 - 2024 STRATEGIC FOCUS ACTION STEPS

- Pilot Medical Respite Care beds and develop sustainable streams of funding to continue the program.**
- Increase the number of organizations and sectors participating in Discharge planning efforts to include the healthcare system, mental health services, and the justice system.**
- Develop Workforce Development Task Group to create new initiatives to connect individuals exiting homelessness to employment opportunities.**
- Help build capacity for behavioral health services. Inadequate community services for treatment, psychiatric, and mental health services are frequently elevated as highest priority challenges for service providers.**
- Pursue funding for staff, initiatives to improve Youth Homelessness system and response.**
- Secure funding for Cambridge Coalition Technical Assistance on data-sharing and cross-system collaboration.**
- Work with the Sangamon County Re-Entry Council to establish new partnerships and set goals toward meeting Strategy 3 Action Steps.**

STRATEGY 4: Community works collaboratively to address homelessness.

1. Develop Strategy Board

The Heartland HOUSED Strategy Board was developed in October of 2022.

2. Staff

The Strategic Plan calls for 6 staff supporting system efforts and strategic plan implementation (3 staff at Heartland HOUSED in place with 4th staff expected to be hired in Quarter 1 of 2024, 2 contracts in place for HMIS and Housing Navigation Staff)

3. Expand Funding

Reaching the goals of the strategic plan will require additional funding and broadening funding sources. The State of IL significantly increased funding to our community in 2023. Additionally, the HCoC secured new project funding from HUD in 2023 for the first time in over a decade.

2022 State and Federal Funding Levels for the HCoC = \$647,667

(HUD = \$421,713, ESG = \$130,954, and HP = \$95,000)

2023 State and Federal Funding Levels for the HCoC = \$2,118,739

(HUD = \$457,659, ESG = \$176,445, HP = \$219,000, IDHS CoC= \$1,265,635)

Additional Funding Opportunities in Motion:

- **HOME-ARP - \$2.4 Million** - City of Springfield and HCoC have worked with HUD for Technical Assistance. The HOME-ARP plan will go through an amendment process to better align these funds with this strategic plan. Funding is likely to start impacting the community in the first half 2024.
- **\$50,000** Grant Received from AETNA to create a Flexible Housing Problem Solving Pool. The HCoC developed a Housing Problem Solving Policy for utilization of these funds to help people exit homelessness quickly.
- **Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln Funders Collaborative** - Heartland HOUSED and the CFLL are developing a concept of a Funders Collaborative to help funds to spur innovation and to mitigate homelessness.

4. Improve the collection and use of data related to homelessness, including community dashboards.

HCoC joined the Illinois Quality Data Collaborative and started accessing Technical Assistance in Fall 2023 to support the development of quality data, a real time by-names list of all people experiencing homelessness, and community dashboards powered by Community Solutions and the Built for Zero movement. The collaborative will be an 18-month process.

5. Coordinate a two-way community communications strategy

- Quarterly reports have been recorded to demonstrate progress on implementation
- Launching Housing Helpline will be a key element in connecting people in need to resources, additionally staff are developing intake guides for all housing programs and developing the resources page on the Heartland HOUSED website
- Lived Experience Focus Groups and Heartland Continuum of Care General Membership meetings provide avenues for feedback from people utilizing system sources and stakeholders

6. Respond to citizen concerns about homelessness and siting Housing. Addressing NIMBY, increase engagement with neighborhood associations, develop a Good neighbor policy

Heartland HOUSED and HCoC Staff participated in a Strategic Communications Training and Technical Assistance process hosted by Spitfire and JP Morgan Chase in Fall 2023 to begin the process of planning conversations around NIMBY and other challenges.

7. Create a strong, sustainable Lived Experience Advisory Board

- In 2023, the HCoC developed a Lived Experience Collaboration Policy. Funding has been included in the Heartland HOUSED budget to compensate people with lived experience for their work and efforts to improve our system to address homelessness.
- Heartland HOUSED System Coordinator began monthly Focus Groups in Fall of 2023 as the initial step to developing the advisory board in early 2024
- A Youth Action Board was developed in partnership with the Youth Service Bureau in June of 2023 to help the HCoC better understand needs and solutions to youth homelessness.

STRATEGY 4 - 2024 STRATEGIC FOCUS ACTION STEPS

- **Develop community facing data dashboards through Community Solutions Built for Zero partnership.**
- **Launch of Heartland Lived Experience Advisory Board.**
- **Fundraising campaign designed to support additional housing opportunities.**
- **Assist in rolling out of the HOME-ARP program.**
- **Heartland HOUSED will pursue new funding avenues for Youth Homelessness, Rapid Rehousing for people fleeing Domestic Violence, and Street Outreach.**
- **Heartland HOUSED will secure new grants, funding partners, and partnerships to diversify funding for solutions to homelessness in Springfield/Sangamon County.**