Unsheltered Homelessness Response Pilot

Unsheltered homelessness is solvable—the proof is in the pilot

SIX-MONTH UPDATE | JULY 2025

Homelessness is a housing affordability issue

Homelessness isn't about bad choices; **it's about the housing market.** For every $100 rent goes up, homelessness rises 9%.[1] Since 2020, unsheltered homelessness in Wake County has doubled.[2]

Homelessness is expensive—and doing nothing is the costliest option. Taxpayers spend up to **$96,000 per person/year** on shelter, encampment clean-ups, emergency room visits, law enforcement, jail time, and other crisis services. None of these expenses actually end homelessness.[3]

Housing with support services costs far less: approximately $27,000 per person/year.[4] By funding real solutions (rent assistance + services), we can actually end homelessness and save taxpayers money.

What is the City Doing?

Raleigh is piloting a new approach to unsheltered homelessness that addresses the root issue rather than simply relocating it. By connecting people to permanent housing paired with ongoing support, the City successfully closed one of its largest encampments and ensured that every resident previously living there is now housed.

Instead of spending taxpayer dollars on endless clean-ups or pushing people to another block, Raleigh is investing in a smarter, long-term strategy that delivers real results.

Peer cities like Houston, Dallas, Kansas City, New Orleans, and Milwaukee are proving it works. They've seen astounding results, from year-over-year homelessness drops up to 17% to effectively ending street homelessness downtown.



Progress & Partnerships

Outreach began at the encampment in October 2024, with partners like Healing Transitions, Oak City Cares, Alliance Health, Advance Community Health, Duke Occupational Therapy, ACORNS, Wake County, WakeMed HEART, Families Together, Triangle Family Services, SouthLight, Inter-Faith Food Shuttle, United Health, and UNC Center for Excellence in Community and Mental Health. Living unsheltered brings serious physical and mental health risks, making partnerships with Alliance and other street medicine providers essential.

All 45 households living at the encampment were enrolled, and the encampment was decommissioned on January 31, 2025. In late April, an additional five more individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the downtown area were enrolled. All participants will receive support for at least two years.







Dix Park Pop-Up Resource Event

Since its launch:

90% of participants are no longer experiencing unsheltered homelessness—a clear sign that focused housing interventions work. This exceeds the 75% benchmark for success in other communities.

Participants are working or enrolled in continuing education or training programs. Participants who need recovery support are actively engaged in those services.

Participants are experiencing meaningful improvements in well-being, family reunification, and housing stability.

Participants take part in workshops on life skills, job readiness, and overall wellbeing and receive ongoing support from case managers to help build lasting stability and independence.

In the intensive case management model, participants create a housing stability plan early on to set goals and map out resources for long-term success.

Participant Voices

Below are a few early stories reflecting the success of housing-focused interventions.

A participant enrolled in late December was able to secure permanent housing and a job. He texted his caseworker, "You know how good it feels to be a **working part of society again!** How much of a relief and back to feeling like myself it is."

A senior housed in December saw his asthma improve quickly and was able to **reunite with his family** and host his daughter and grandkids for the holidays.

An 81-year-old man with a serious heart condition, who had been sleeping in his car downtown, was enrolled in the pilot in late April. He works as an Uber Eats driver, where he puts in long hours trying to make ends meet. Thanks to quick coordination between the City and community partners Healing Transitions and Triangle Family Services, he moved into a hotel the morning after enrollment. He told staff, **"Last night was the best night of sleep I've ever had."** He moved into permanent housing less than a week later.

One pilot participant is now living in an Oxford House, a recovery house for individuals recovering from substance use disorders, and enjoying his recovery. Since being housed, he is now **able to work full-time at a local restaurant** and is looking for permanent housing so he can reunite with his three children.

"It gives me everything. **Peace, safety, everything.** A chance to be able to reestablish and start building my life. And that's what's very important." – J.D., Pilot Participant

"Having somewhere to come home, and have some peace and be inside... **It's just a good thing."**
– R.F., Pilot Participant

"Without this program we wouldn't be where we are. It gave us a chance to become vital members of society again, have a place to live, to maintain our health. It's our second chance."

– Participant



Pilot Participant R.F.



Pilot Participant J.D.



Before Encampment Decommissioning



After Encampment Decommissioning

Ongoing Research

The **University of Pennsylvania's Housing Initiative** is evaluating the program through monthly surveys and six-month interviews. The evaluation will compare the outcomes of pilot participants with those in the community receiving usual care over two years. Outcomes tracked will include housing stability, health, employment, financial well-being, and hope for the future.



Dix Park Pop-Up Resource Event

Learn More

This pilot is part of the City's long-term commitment to ending homelessness through proven, collaborative strategies.

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Questions? Contact homelessness@raleighnc.gov

References

1. *Homelessness: Better HUD Oversight of Data Collection Could Improve Estimates of Homeless Population*; United States Government Accountability Office, 2020.
2. *2020 and 2023 Point-in-Time Counts*; Wake Continuum of Care; 2020 and 2023.
3. *The Way Home*; Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County, 2024.
4. *City of Raleigh Unsheltered Homelessness Response Strategy;* Sagrado Strategies, 2025.