

4.08 Using Advocacy to Address Homelessness at the State and Local Levels



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Executive Director, Community Housing of Maine

Michael Giovanis

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Amy Riegel

Executive Director, Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio

Cathryn Vassel

CEO, Partners for Home

With rents skyrocketing across the nation and incomes failing to keep pace, a nationwide housing crisis has emerged – and with it, a sharp increase in the rate of homelessness. Service providers are now working with state and local leaders to secure funding to build affordable housing. In this session, learn about successful advocacy efforts from around the country that have led to the creation of more housing resources.





4.08 Using Advocacy to Address Homelessness at the State and Local Levels

2/27/25

**Moderator: Cullen Ryan
Executive Director
Community Housing of Maine**

Why advocate?

1. Despite how obvious it is to us that we need to end and prevent homelessness, effective policies or resources will not arrive on their own.
2. There are thousands of competing priorities and an atmosphere of austerity.
3. We are the experts on homelessness.
4. We have data, compelling stories, and passion to help convince decision-makers to do the right thing.
5. Without our unity and guidance, a lot of people trying to help with different ideas will lead to chaotic outcomes and unproductive results.
 - With unity, we can get everyone on the same page to work to end homelessness together.

Panelists

Amy Riegel, Executive Director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio

Amy has helped state and local leaders get together because no Federal funds are likely to come soon. She will discuss her work in getting a state-level Low Income Housing Tax Credit passed in Ohio.

Michael Giovannis, a Person With Lived Experience and part of the Advocacy Network in Minneapolis.

Michael was instrumental in helping the Minnesota Legislature commit \$2 billion in resources to provide housing and services for people experiencing homelessness. He will speak to the importance of getting everyone on the same page to speak with one voice.

Cathryn Vassell, CEO of Partners for Home in Atlanta, GA

Cathryn advocated to city officials to help secure \$75 million in financial support from the city for housing and homelessness programs.





Housing Advocacy

2025

Mission Statement: COHHIO is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to ending homelessness and to promoting decent, safe, fair, affordable housing for all, with a focus on assisting low-income and special needs populations.

History: COHHIO was created in 1994 when the the Ohio Coalition for the Homeless merged with the Ohio Housing Coalition. The new organization advocates for ending homelessness through expanding access to affordable housing.

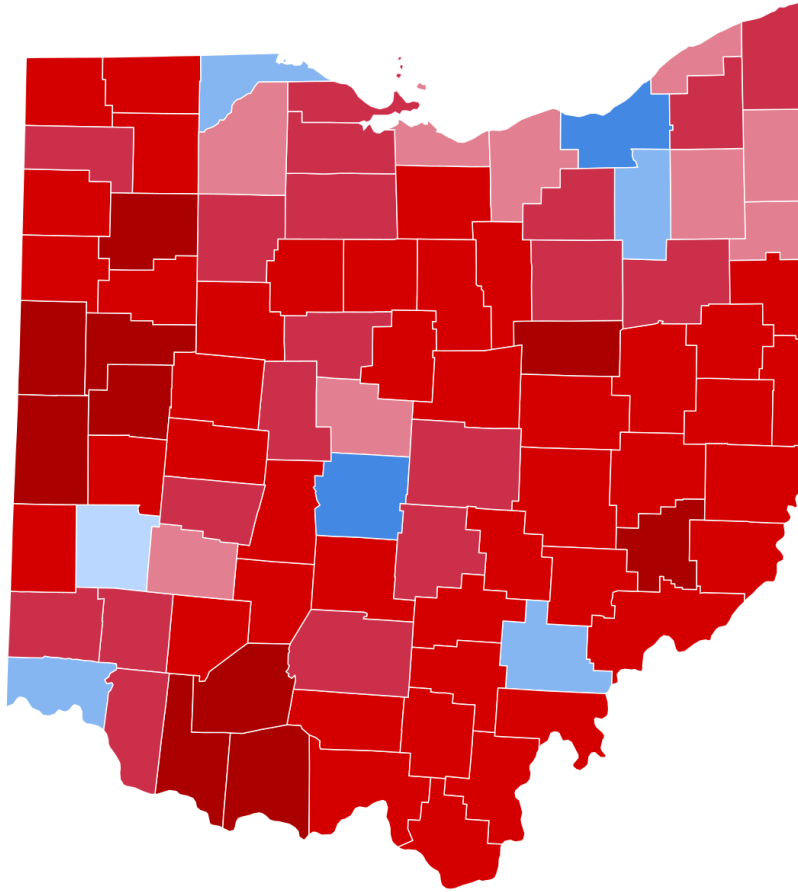


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Politics in Ohio



- Republican Governor
- Republican Controlled House (65/99)
- Republican Controlled Senate (24/33)
 - Strong anti-rental housing Senate President

Policy Considerations

- ✓ Design Housing Ready Communities
- ✓ Increase Housing Supply
- ✓ Maintain Housing Affordability
- ✓ Enhance Quality Housing
- ✓ Improve Tenant Protections



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2023 Momentum

- ✓ State Low Income Housing Tax Credit
- ✓ Welcome Home Ohio
- ✓ State Single Family Tax Credit
- ✓ Expanded Ohio Housing Trust Fund
- ✓ Healthy Beginnings at Home
- ✓ Senate Select Committee on Housing



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2024 Ohio Housing Profile

In **Ohio**, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is **\$1,082**. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities — without paying more than 30% of income on housing — a household must earn **\$3,608** monthly or **\$43,293** annually. Assuming a 40-hour work week, 52 weeks per year, this level of income translates into an hourly Housing Wage of:

\$20.81
PER HOUR
STATE HOUSING
WAGE

FACTS ABOUT OHIO:

STATE FACTS	
Minimum Wage	\$10.45
Average Renter Wage	\$18.26
2-Bedroom Housing Wage	\$20.81
Number of Renter Households	1,589,094
Percent Renters	33%

80
Work Hours Per Week At
Minimum Wage To Afford a **2-Bedroom**
Rental Home (at FMR)

64
Work Hours Per Week At
Minimum Wage To Afford a **1-Bedroom**
Rental Home (at FMR)

2
Number of Full-Time Jobs At
Minimum Wage To Afford a
2-Bedroom Rental Home (at FMR)

1.6
Number of Full-Time Jobs At
Minimum Wage To Afford a
1-Bedroom Rental Home (at FMR)

MOST EXPENSIVE AREAS	HOUSING WAGE
Columbus HMFA	\$25.04
Union County HMFA	\$24.04
Cincinnati HMFA	\$22.98
Cleveland-Elyria MSA	\$21.31
Akron MSA	\$19.98

MSA = Metropolitan Statistical Area; HMFA = HUD Metro FMR Area.

* Ranked from Highest to Lowest 2-Bedroom Housing Wage. Includes District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.



Most Common Jobs in Ohio

Occupation	Total Ohio Employment	Median Hourly Wage
General Operations Manager	143,080	\$45.14
Fast Food Worker	140,760	\$13.16
Stockers/Order Filler	135,260	\$17.57
Registered Nurse	133,300	\$38.44
Cashier	122,370	\$13.27
Retail Salesperson	120,500	\$14.46
Laborers/Freight Mover	114,010	\$18.08
Customer Service Rep	99,090	\$19.17
Assemblers/Fabricator	99,020	\$19.31
Home Health Aide	91,890	\$14.08
Ohio's 2 Bedroom Housing Wage		\$20.81

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2023 [State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates](#)

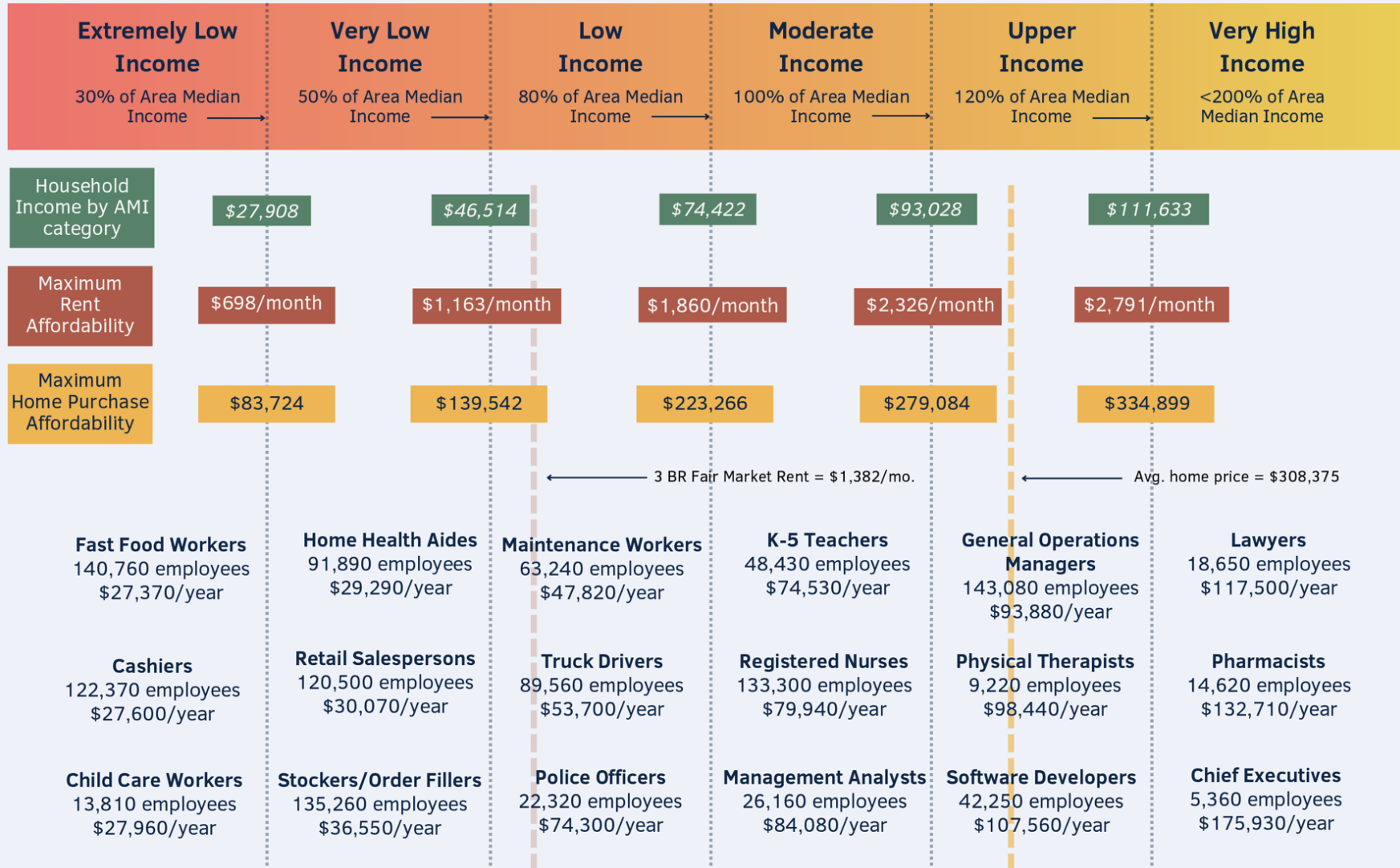
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Coalition on Homelessness
and Housing in Ohio

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN OHIO BY JOB AND INCOME

Ohio Four-Person Area Median Income = \$93,028



Sources: National Low Income Housing Coalition "Out of Reach 2024" report (rent affordability based on 30% of income); Ohio REALTORS average home price June 2024 (home purchase affordability based on 3 times annual income); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2023 Ohio Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates. Updated August, 2024

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Why the OLIHTC

- Lack of Affordable Housing in Ohio
- Strong Coalition
- Proven Model
- Rural Set Aside



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What's Next

- Now - 2 Year Budget
- Gubernatorial Election
- Economic Expansion
- Housing Inflation
- Coalition Building in Trendy Times

**HOME
MATTERS
TO OHIO**

Introduction – Who I Am & My Work



Organizer

Founder of the Lived Experience Advocacy Network (LEAN), ensuring those impacted by homelessness shape policy.



Advocate

Led Minnesota's first Lived Experience Day on the Hill and engage in advocacy efforts for housing justice.



Policy

Member of multiple housing committees, advising on funding, tenant protections, and housing stability.



Consultant

Founded Availing Echoism. Provides services in the areas of Operations, Finance, HR, Government Relations, and more

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Examining 2023 Success In Minnesota

A unique year that provided many lessons



Budget Surplus & Political Alignment

Minnesota's budget surplus and DFL control enabled bold housing investments.



Organized Advocacy & Coordination

Housing organizations and lived experience advocates worked together effectively.



Comprehensive Policy Approach

Funds targeted rental assistance, new housing, tenant protections, and homelessness services.

The Historic 2023 Housing Budget

A \$2.6 Billion Investment for Stability



Largest Housing Budget Ever

\$2.6 billion investment over four years to address homelessness, housing stability, and homeownership.



Expanding Housing Access

\$1.19 billion for new housing, public housing rehabilitation, and workforce housing.



Homelessness Prevention & Support

\$247 million for family homelessness prevention, rental assistance, and supportive housing.

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Program	Description	FY 2024-2025
INCREASE HOUSING STABILITY – EXISTING PROGRAMS		
Family Homeless Prevention	Provides short-term assistance to families at risk of homelessness. Types of assistance may include one-time rental payments, assistance with first or last month's rent, or one-time mortgage payments.	\$120.5 million <i>+\$100 million</i>
Housing Trust Fund	Provides rental assistance for individuals and families, many of whom have previously experienced homelessness.	\$23.3 million
Homework Starts with Home	Provides rent and other housing assistance to families with children that lack housing stability.	\$5.5 million <i>+\$2 million</i>
Bridges	Provides rental assistance for families in which at least one adult member has a serious mental illness.	\$10.7 million <i>+\$2 million</i>
INCREASE HOUSING STABILITY – NEW PROGRAMS		
Strengthen Supportive Housing	Provides resources to strengthen supportive housing for individuals or families who are at-risk of or are experiencing homelessness.	\$25 million
Rent Assistance	"Bring It Home" statewide rental assistance, funded via ongoing appropriation and in the metro area via a. 25% metro-wide sales tax.	\$124 million** <i>\$46 m - budget</i> <i>\$77 m - sales tax</i>
**funded with new dedicated sales tax revenue		

le Home.

What Worked: How We Secured Housing Wins

Organized Advocacy & Coordination-Expanded



Unified Advocacy Strategy

Housing groups, tenant organizations, and lived experience advocates aligned efforts for maximum impact.



Consistent Direct Engagement

Persistent lobbying, testimonies, and organized legislative meetings built strong policymaker relationships.



Strategic Use of Data & Stories

Combining personal lived experience stories with hard data made arguments more compelling.

The Power of Organizing – Lived Experience & Advocacy

Mobilizing Voices for Housing Justice

- **Lived Experience Day on the Hill:** First event of its kind (for housing) in Minnesota, bringing directly impacted people to lawmakers.
- **Broad Coalition Advocacy:** Housing organizations worked together to push for lived experience testimony and 1 on 1s with legislators.
- **Training and Supports:** Providing trainings and financial/accessibility supports is a key step in truly empowering those with lived experience.



Photo by D H on Unsplash

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Challenges & Concerns – Looking Ahead

Sustaining Progress Beyond 2023



Potential Fiscal Cliffs

Many programs were funded with one-time money, raising sustainability concerns.



Renewing Political Commitment

Future legislative sessions may shift priorities away from housing.



Implementation Hurdles

Ensuring funds reach communities efficiently and equitably remains a challenge.

Practical Strategy Takeaways for Future Advocacy Efforts



Funding Must Be Sustainable

Avoid strategies that have the potential to create unsustainable funding.



Lived Experience Drives Policy

Direct engagement from impacted individuals increases political will.



Leverage Advocacy Networks

Organizations like statewide coalitions, policy agenda drafting bodies, and lived experience networks.

Practical Strategy Takeaways for Future Advocacy Efforts



Codify Housing as a Legislative Priority

Push for permanent housing investments beyond single-year budget cycles.



Expand Cross-Sector Partnerships

Align housing with health, workforce, and economic development policies.



Use Data & Narrative Effectively

Combine strong statistical evidence with real-life impact stories.

PARTNERS FOR HOME

Local Advocacy to Secure Funding for PSH

Cathryn Vassell

February 27, 2025

BUILDING ON A STRONG FOUNDATION

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PIPELINE



INVESTING \$22 MILLION/\$40K PER UNIT



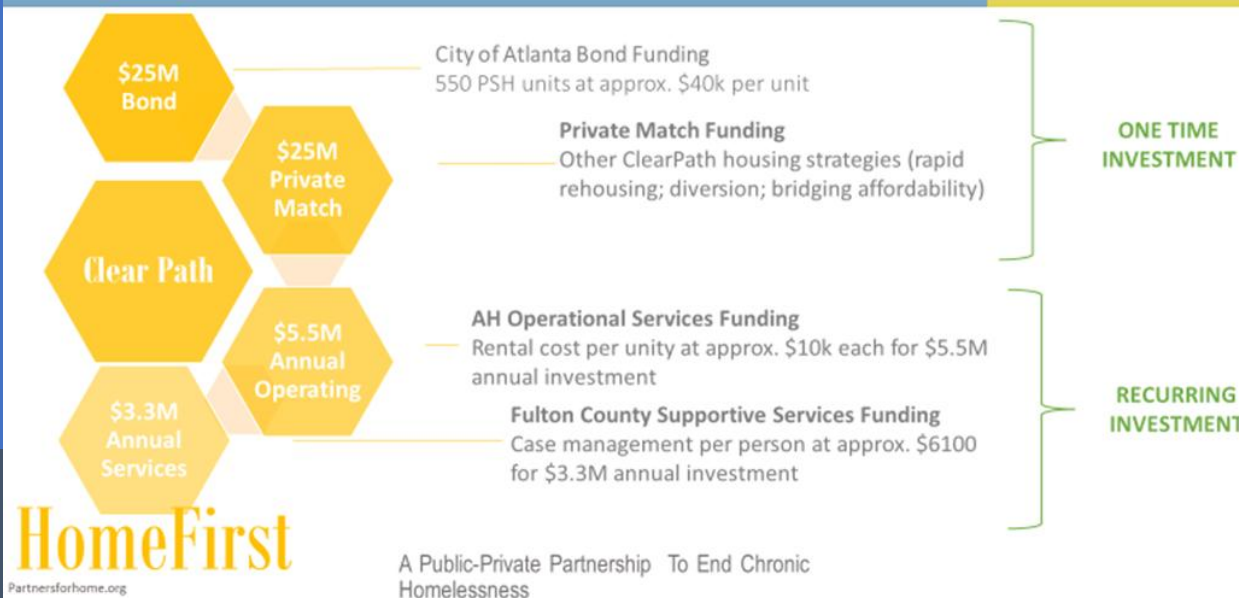
BUILDING 550 UNITS



LEVERAGING OVER \$300M

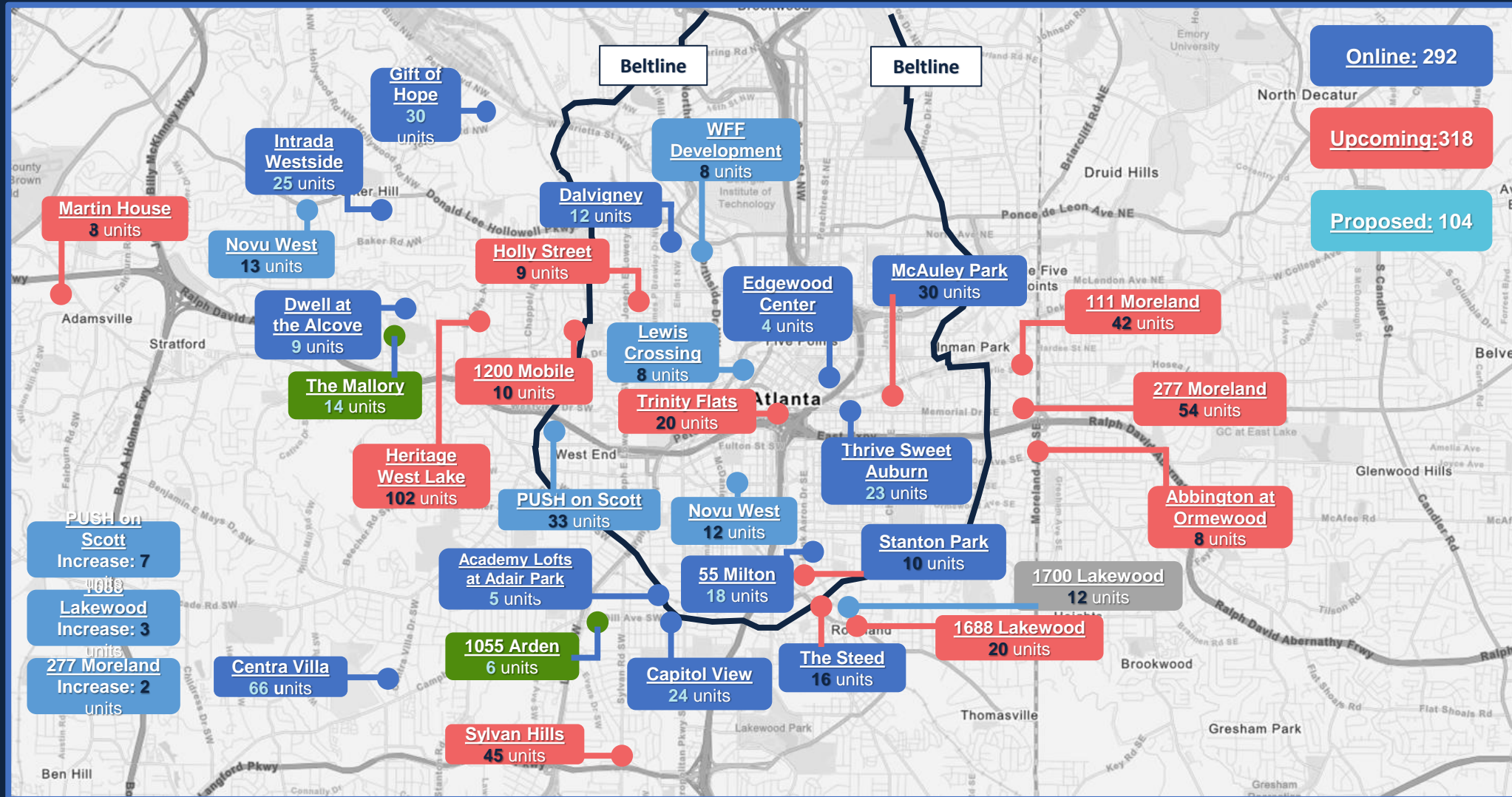
A Sustainable PSH Model

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PSH Pipeline Project Map





**AVAILABLE
PROPERTY
UNITS: 245**



**UNITS
COMING
SOON: 325**

PARTNERS FOR **HOME**



PSH PIPELINE - 2025

Project Status Update



1688 LAKEWOOD

- 20 PSH units
- ECD: Summer 2025
- Services: Fulton County DBHDD



277 MORELAND

- 56 PSH units
- (6) ADA units
- ECD: Spring 2025
- Developer: Stryant Investments
- Services: Fulton County DBHDD



HOLLY STREET

- 40 1bd & 2bd units- 55+ seniors
- 9 PSH units
- ECD: Summer 2025
- Developer: Quest Development
- Services: Fulton County DBHDD



ABBINGTON AT ORMEWOOD

- 42 Studio and 1bd units
- 8 PSH units
- ECD: Spring 2025
- Developer: REA Ventures
- Services: Fulton County DBHDD

COMING SOON

PSH PIPELINE

Project Status Update



SYLVAN HILLS

- 227 mixed income affordable and market units
- **45 dedicated PSH units**
- Onsite supportive, wrap around services.



HERITAGE AT WEST LAKE

- **102 PSH units out of 102 total units.**
- 1-bedroom units only
- Onsite health service provider, community farm, commercial space and nearby access to public transportation.



MARTIN HOUSE

- 153 mixed income affordable and market units
- **8 dedicated PSH units**
- Onsite supportive, wrap around services.

PUSH ON SCOTT

- **7 PSH units**
- 40 unit multifamily development

TRINITY CENTRAL FLATS

- 218 mixed income affordable and market units
- **20 dedicated PSH units**
- Onsite supportive, wrap around services.

COMING SOON

RAPID HOUSING INITIATIVE

PURPOSE

Initiative to support Atlanta's residents experiencing homelessness by providing **500 units** of safe, dignified, quick-delivery housing on public land by end of 2025

TIMELINE & FUNDING

- August 2023: **\$4M** Executive Order to launch Phase I
- October 2023: **\$7.5M** in housing bond funds allocated*
- Q1 2024: **\$3M** from Housing Trust Fund for Phase II
- Q3 2024: Legislation for **\$50M** bond + additional **\$10M** committed from the Housing Trust Fund
- Q4 2024: Bonds issued to Invest Atlanta

*Made possible from the proof point created by the HomeFirst



Advocacy - Not Just the Money

- Unified Vision with City/County Partner
- City land
- City willingness to partner with nonprofit and developer = nimbleness and efficiency
- City support critical
 - Housing policy team instrumental in getting all City departments aligned
 - Eliminating barriers related to permitting, utilities and red tape!

RAPID HOUSING PROGRESS



PRODUCE 500 UNITS BY 2025

ACQUISITIONS/TURNKEY PROJECTS

729 Bonaventure (Referring Tenants Now)
(24 units)

Two Developments in Negotiations

NEW BUILD

Melody – Completed in February 2024
40 units

Waterworks Reservoir – Deliver in Sept 2025
100 units by 2/2025, w/ expanded supportive services pilot for high-care populations (30 units)

405 Cooper St. – Deliver by end of 2025
100 units by end of 2025



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Advocacy Agenda For Sustainability

2025

New dedicated ACT team support – 3 teams at \$750K per team = \$2.25M

Legislative
Session

Renewal of street outreach funds - \$825,000

Services for the Melody at the full \$515K annually (currently at \$300K)

Post-
Session
Through
2026

Begin conversations with Governor's Office in May, 2025

Seek \$24M state commitment for rapid housing support services, ongoing outreach and continuation of rapid rehousing to avoid COVID CLIFF

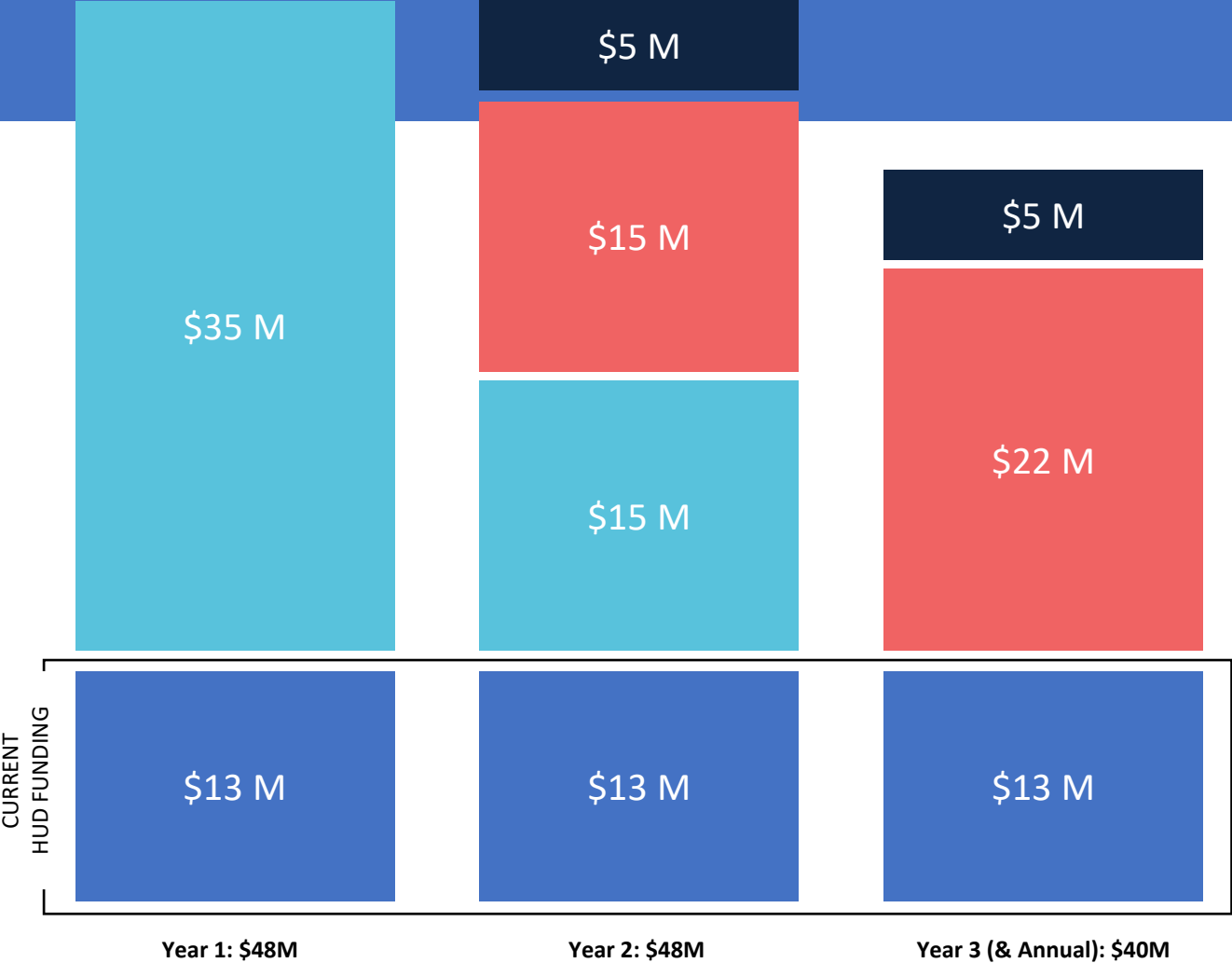
Partner with City of Atlanta to secure new revenue vehicle at local level – exploring a parking tax

ATLANTA RISING: SUSTAINABILITY

OUR PATH FORWARD

A powerful initial investment from Philanthropy would catalyze Partners for HOME’s efforts to address homelessness in Atlanta, allowing us to get ahead of the problem while developing sustainable funding to propel these efforts in the future.

This transformative early investment would allow us to implement our model of change at a historic pace and scale, provide proof of concept, and secure a sustainable funding model.



LEGEND

- Foundation Funding
- Local (City + State) Public Funding
- Other Private Philanthropy

Questions?

Cathryn Vassell

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