

# BLOOMINGTON STATE OF HOMELESSNESS STUDY

Developed by:  
Analytic Insight  
May 2023







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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Homelessness affects every community in the United States. Housing costs continue to rise in most communities, and eviction rates are rising in many areas. Rental assistance programs have declined, while costs for family support services like childcare and health insurance have all continued to increase. Homelessness rates increased nationwide in 2022, up 6% from a low in 2016<sup>1</sup>. A shortage of affordable housing exacerbates the problem nationwide.

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### The Current State of Homelessness in Bloomington

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- ❖ According to the 2022 Housing Inventory Count<sup>2</sup>, the Hennepin County CoC's shelter and housing resources add up to 11,533 total year-round beds, including 1,409 family units with 4,898 beds, 813 beds available to those experiencing chronic homelessness, 673 dedicated to Veterans and 645 youth beds.
- ❖ Families with children were 18% of unsheltered households, and children under the age of 18 comprised 25% of those experiencing homelessness in Bloomington.
- ❖ African Americans comprised 88% of those experiencing homelessness in Hennepin County, although they comprise 14.2% of the population overall. Further, African Americans were far more likely to be unsheltered (64% as compared to 25% of Asians, 20% of those who are multi-racial, and 1% of whites.) 22% of Hispanics were unsheltered.
- ❖ Among those in shelters within the Minneapolis/Hennepin County CoC area who reported that Bloomington was their most recent residence, 13% are over the age of 55 and 42% are between 25 and 55 years of age.
- ❖ Among those in shelters within the Minneapolis/Hennepin County CoC area who reported Bloomington as their most recent residence, 30% were previously in emergency shelter such as a hotel or motel paid for with a voucher or Host Home shelter.

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### At-Risk of Homelessness

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- ❖ Almost half of Bloomington renters (47%) pay 30% or more of their income in rent.
- ❖ Eight percent of Bloomington residents live below the threshold for poverty.
- ❖ One in fifty (2%) of occupied dwellings in Bloomington lack complete kitchen facilities and 1.6% lack complete plumbing facilities<sup>3</sup>.

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### Stakeholder Perspectives

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Most interview respondents said that access to affordable housing options is a critical part of ending homelessness in Bloomington. Several also described the need for mental health and substance use services. Prevention resources such as access to short-term financial assistance for rent or utilities to help those in need and at risk of eviction.

Many interview respondents said that youth services are adequate in the city, and Veterans' services are also adequate, but found that funding for services addressing homelessness among older adults,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC\\_HIC\\_State\\_MN\\_2022.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_HIC_State_MN_2022.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey, 2011



single adults, families and the chronically homeless are needed. In particular, many respondents noted the need for emergency shelter within the city of Bloomington.

### Strategies to Combat Homelessness

Combating homelessness requires comprehensive strategies to help residents experiencing homelessness move into permanent housing and achieve housing stability. This often requires emergency housing, but also demands a coordinated entry system to place people in permanent housing and provide wrap-around services needed to maintain housing stability.

Homeless delivery systems are complex and unique to each community. The city's strategy to address homelessness will need to be placed in the context of the CoC's planning and efforts to address homelessness in the county. The city also needs to address the individual needs of its residents, which include substandard housing needs, rental assistance and eviction prevention, short-term financial assistance, and the multifaceted needs of people experiencing homelessness, often with extremely limited resources. Thus, a coordinated approach is needed to address and prevent homelessness. This study found that the primary needs for the city include:

- ❖ Prevention activities, particularly targeting schools, and addressing families at risk of homelessness.
- ❖ Emergency and temporary shelter within the city of Bloomington.
- ❖ Transportation needs for those seeking services outside the city limits.
- ❖ Advocacy to increase funding for homelessness and to address affordable housing.
- ❖ Public education and engagement.



## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The primary goal of this study is to gain an understanding of existing gaps and possible duplications of service in the overall social safety net, as well as the respective goals of Bloomington stakeholders relative to the community's desire to develop a comprehensive response to homelessness.

The city of Bloomington faces some unique challenges. Proximity to Minneapolis and St. Paul, the largest and second largest cities in the state of Minnesota, can provide advantages related to access to services where access exists, however it also presents challenges related to being seen by the county and included in planning efforts. In the county's strategic plan, Human Services "Minneapolis" appears nine times, whereas "Bloomington" does not appear.

Bloomington is the fourth largest city and the seventh fastest growing city in the state and requires its own infrastructure of services and programs.

The city is part of the Hennepin County Continuum of Care, which supports coordination of the countywide effort to prevent and end homelessness.

Over a dozen nonprofit organizations and government agencies work together to provide housing and case management support for individuals experiencing homelessness in Bloomington. An inventory of services is available later in this report.

### CONTINUUM OF CARE

A CoC is a regional or local planning body that coordinates federal funding for housing and services for people experiencing homelessness.

Communities receive CoC funding primarily through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD identifies four necessary parts of a continuum:

- Outreach, intake, and assessment to identify service and housing needs and connect people to both.
- Emergency shelter to provide an immediate and safe alternative to the streets, especially for homeless families with children.
- Transitional housing with supportive services to allow for the development of skills that support housing stability.
- Permanent supportive housing to provide individuals with an affordable place to live with supportive services if needed.

CoCs conduct a biannual count of the homeless population and an annual enumeration of emergency systems, transitional housing units and the beds that make up the homeless assistance system.

<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/what-is-a-continuum-of-care/>



## DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS IN BLOOMINGTON

To develop a better understanding of homelessness in Bloomington, the City contracted with the research firm Analytic Insight, LLC (AI) to develop a report on homelessness in the city. The objectives included studying the conditions of homelessness in Bloomington, the current resources used to address homelessness and the service needs to better help people experiencing homelessness.

AI designed a methodology to collect a range of community perspectives on reducing and ending homelessness in the community. AI's analysis on the current state of homelessness included identifying gaps and needs, as well as soliciting input into how the community could improve its approach to reducing homelessness. This analysis is based on several information sources:

1. Key Informational Interviews conducted with five (5) professionals working in the field of homelessness in the city of Bloomington or Hennepin County.
2. Secondary data analysis including Census, HUD, HMIS, and case studies of similar communities for best practices.

### Key Stakeholder Interviews

AI interviewed five stakeholders identified by the City. These stakeholders were obtained through a list provided to AI by the City and included known service providers and local agencies that work with the local homeless community. AI requested a telephone interview with a representative from each organization to discuss the services and resources the organization provides to people experiencing homelessness, how well sub-populations within the homeless community are served, the network of organizations who serve people experiencing homelessness and the need for coordinating efforts, other gaps and duplications of service, challenges that organizations face, and suggestions to better engage the community around the homelessness issue.

Interviews covered the following topic areas:

- ❖ Currently available services.
- ❖ Causes of homelessness and prevention needs.
- ❖ Needs and service gaps provided to targeted populations.
- ❖ Community needs and attitudes.

### Secondary Data Analysis

Census data, HMIS data and county level PIT data were examined. The HMIS data focused on respondents who named Bloomington as the city of their last residence.

### Inventory of Services

The inventory of services was developed by searching information on services and programs discussed during the informant interviews, in documents provided by the city, and through Internet searches.



## THE CURRENT STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN BLOOMINGTON

### Point in Time (PIT) Count

Each year in January, communities count the number of people who are experiencing homelessness during a 24-hour period. Known as a point-in-time or PIT count, this provides a snapshot of homelessness in a community. This count and the data collected from people experiencing homelessness help service providers better understand the needs of the people they serve, as well as to plan on what services and programs should be implemented or expanded upon in the community.

Although a PIT count is conducted for Hennepin County, numbers are not provided independently for the city of Bloomington.

While the total number of couch homeless in Bloomington is unknown, the CoC reported 1,645 people in emergency housing, 546 people in transitional shelters, and 487 people living unsheltered, for a total of 2,678 people experiencing homelessness in Hennepin County on a single night in January of 2022.

For the purpose of the PIT count, a person is identified as homeless if the individual or family lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; will imminently lose their primary residence; or is fleeing domestic violence and has no other residence or lacks the resources and support networks to secure one.

### 2022 HENNEPIN COUNTY PIT COUNT FINDINGS:

- ❖ Children under the age of 18 comprised 25% of those experiencing homelessness.
- ❖ African Americans comprised 88% of those experiencing homelessness in Hennepin County, although they comprise 14.2% of the population overall. \*
- ❖ African Americans were far more likely to be unsheltered (64% as compared to 25% of Asians, 20% of those who are multi-racial, and 1% of whites. 22% of Hispanics were unsheltered.
- ❖ 9% of those experiencing homelessness were Hispanic.
- ❖ Families with children comprised 18% of households.
- ❖ 580 persons were considered “chronically” homeless, of whom 15% are unsheltered.

<https://www.hennepin.us/-/media/hennepinus/your-government/projects-initiatives/coc/2022-pit.pdf>

\* Census, 2022

	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Unsheltered	Total
Total Number of Households	1133	378	279	1790
<b>Total Number of persons (Adults &amp; Children)</b>	1645	546	487	2678
Number of Persons (under age 18)	496	164	5	665
Number of Persons (18 - 24)	108	97	43	248
Number of Persons (over age 24)	1041	285	439	1765





## Housing Inventory Count (HIC) Data

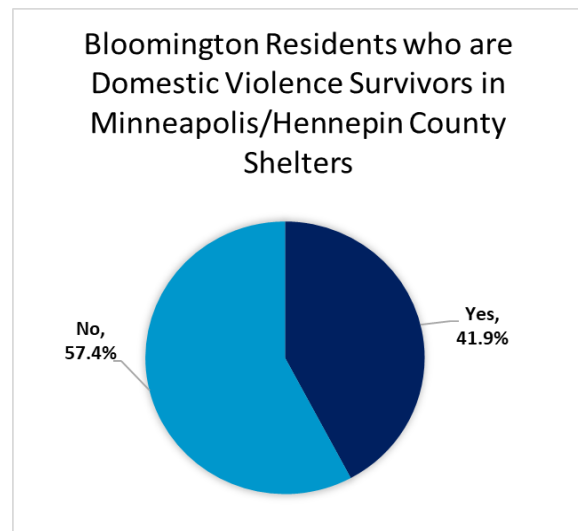
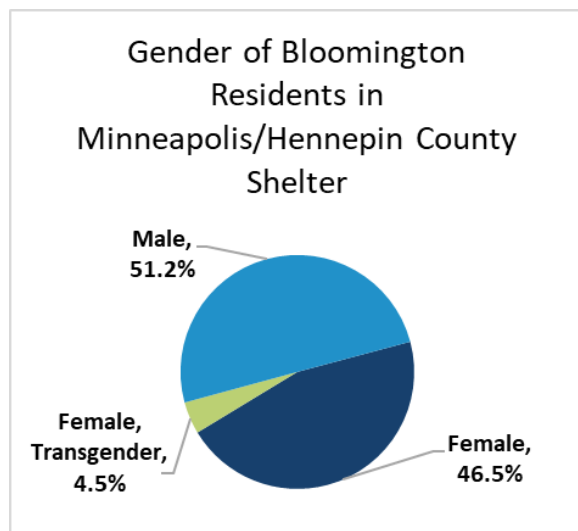
According to the 2022 Housing Inventory Count<sup>4</sup>, the Hennepin County CoC's shelter and housing resources add up to 11,533 total year-round beds, including 1,409 family units with 4,898 beds, 813 beds available to those experiencing chronic homelessness, 673 dedicated to Veterans and 645 youth beds.

## The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. Each CoC is responsible for collecting and reporting data according to Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) data collection, management, and reporting standards. HMIS data standards have been established by HUD, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to allow for standardized data collection on homeless individuals and families across systems.

In 2021, the Hennepin County CoC documented 14,039 households receiving homelessness services, an increase over 2020's 13,931 households. Within those households, 172 individuals listed their last city of residence as Bloomington. This represents a decrease from 2020, when 205 people experiencing homelessness and presenting for services listed their city of origin as Bloomington.

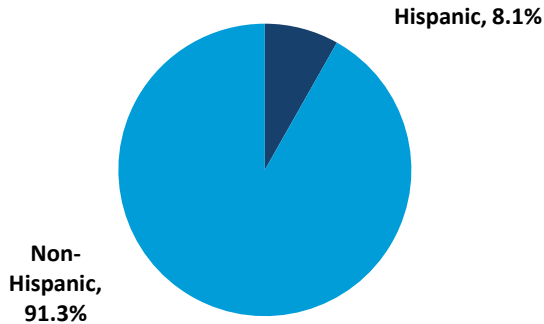
The following graphs describe the individuals in the CoC HMIS data who reported Bloomington as their most recent city of residence.



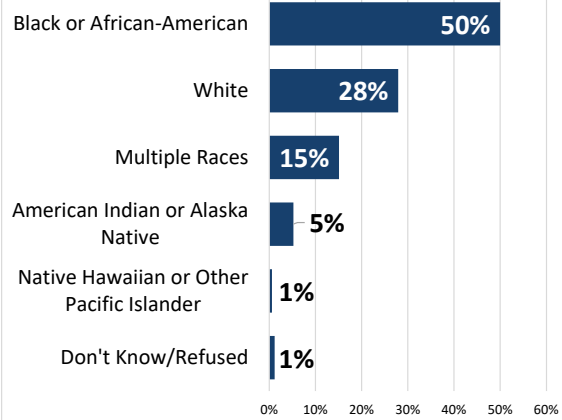
<sup>4</sup> [https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC\\_HIC\\_State\\_MN\\_2022.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_HIC_State_MN_2022.pdf)



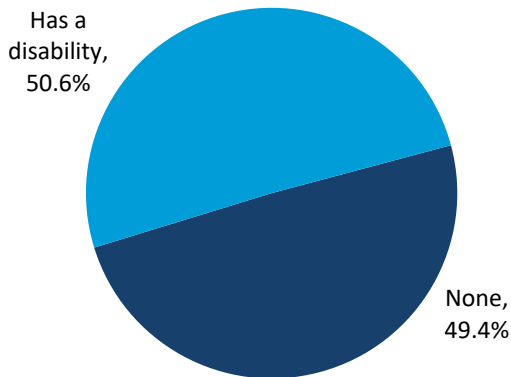
### Hispanic Ethnicity of Bloomington Residents in Minneapolis/Hennepin County Shelter



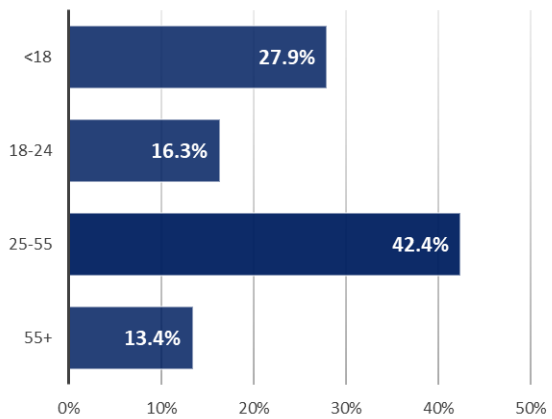
### Race and Ethnicity of Bloomington Residents in Minneapolis/Hennepin County Shelter



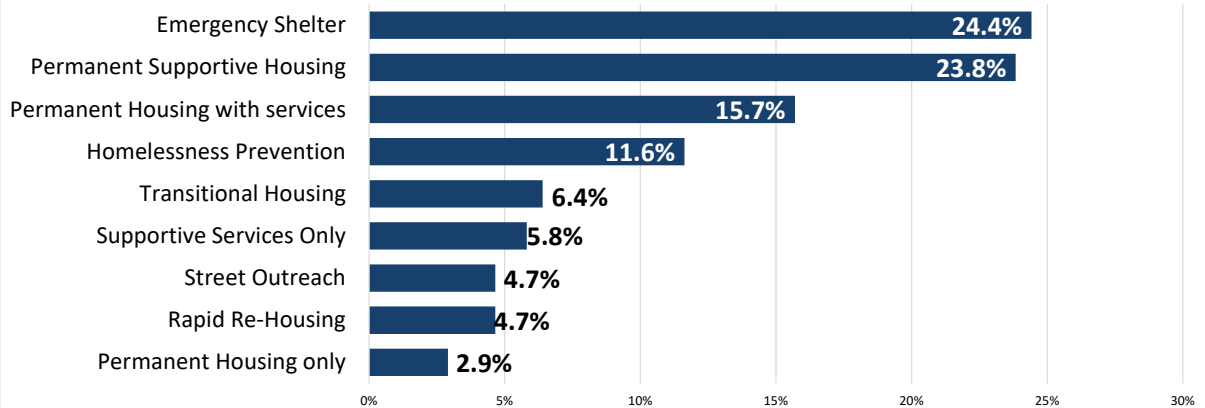
### Bloomington Residents in Minneapolis/Hennepin County Shelters with a Disability



### Age at Entry to Minneapolis/Hennepin County Shelters

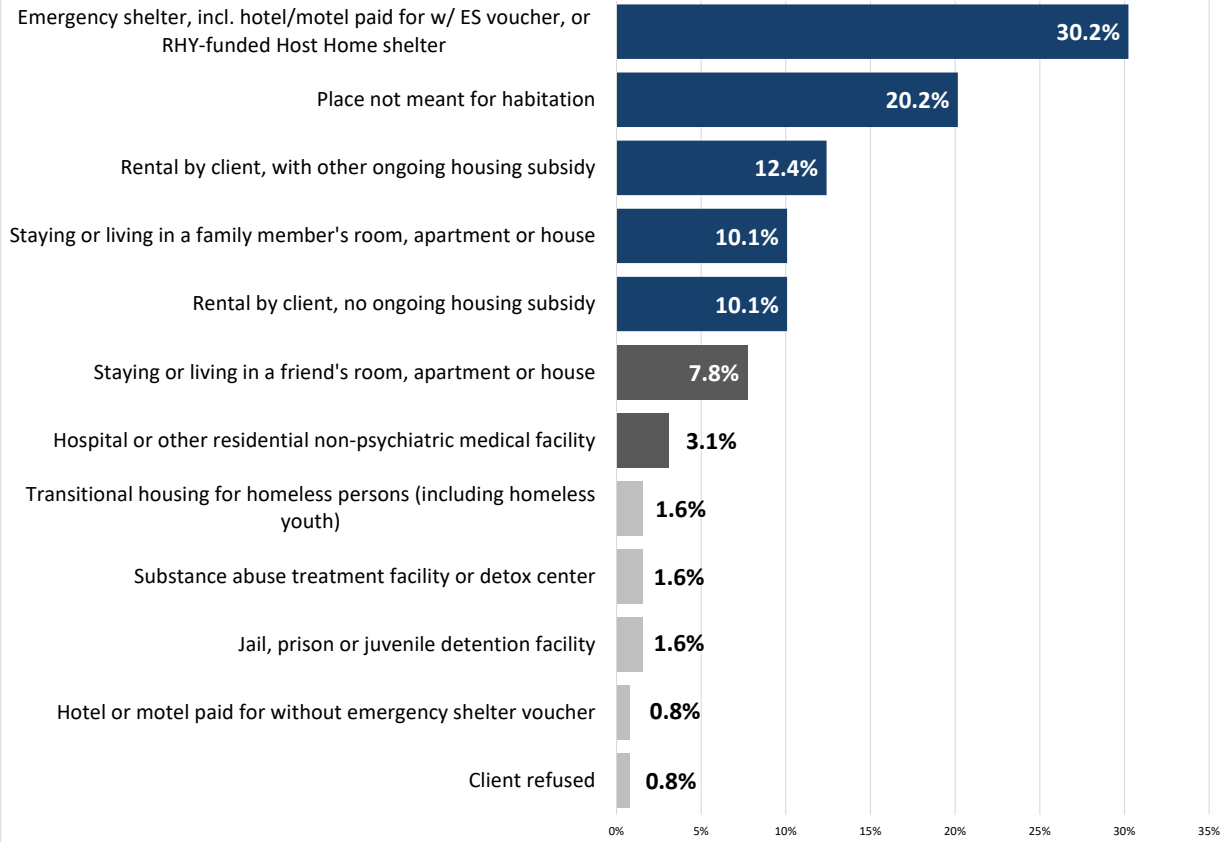


### Type of Services Received

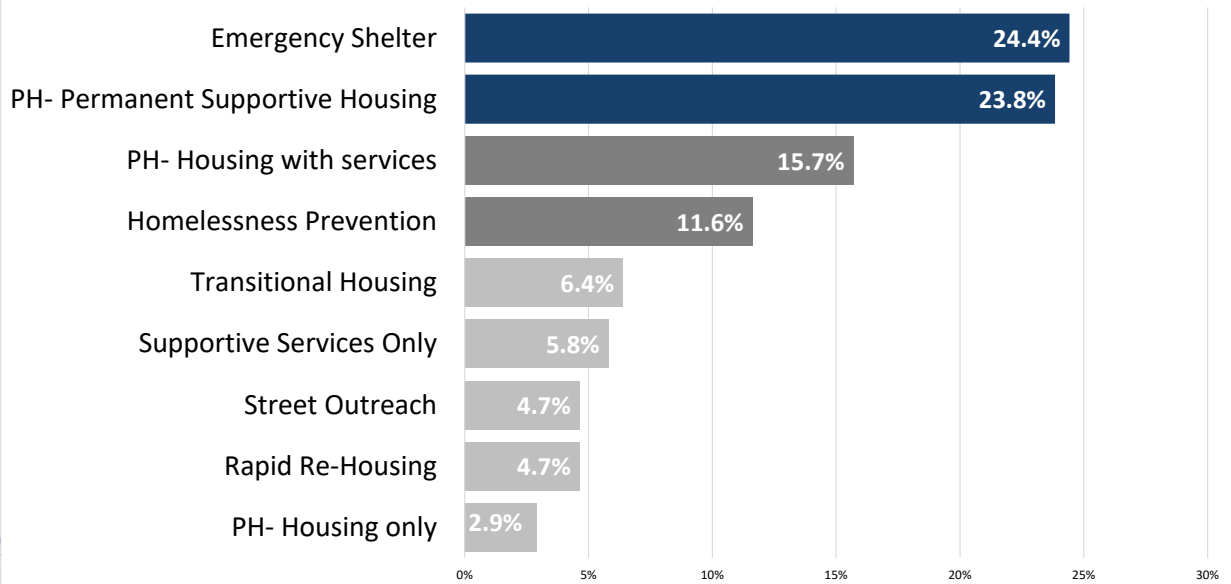




### Residence Prior to Entry to Minneapolis/Hennepin County Shelters



### Needs of Bloomington Residents at Minneapolis/Hennepin County Shelters

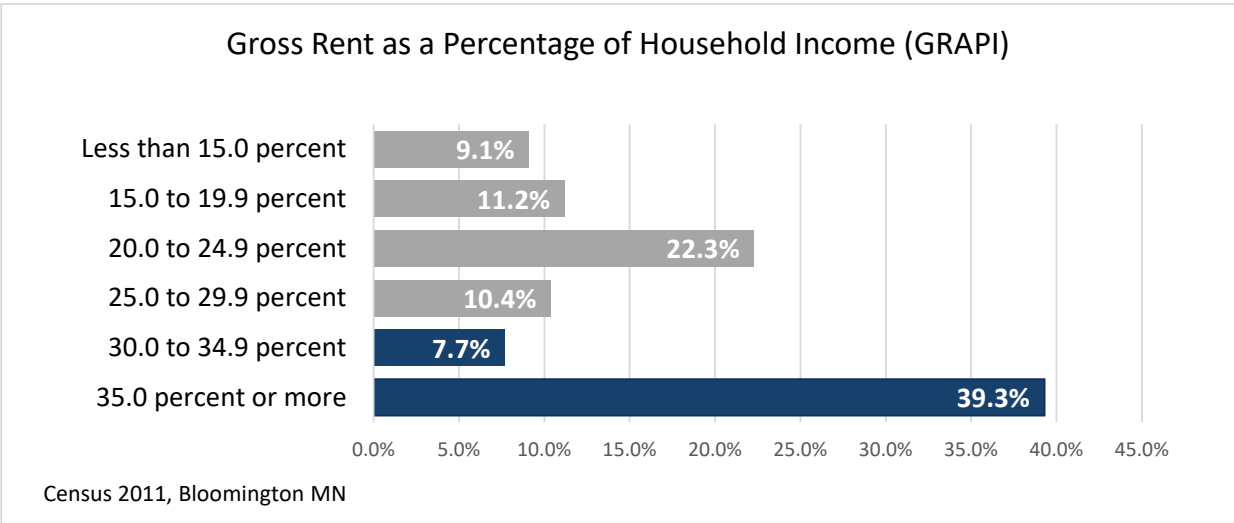




## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

According to HUD, families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.

As shown below, almost half of Bloomington renters (47%) pay 30% or more in rent.



### City of Bloomington Quick Facts, 2021

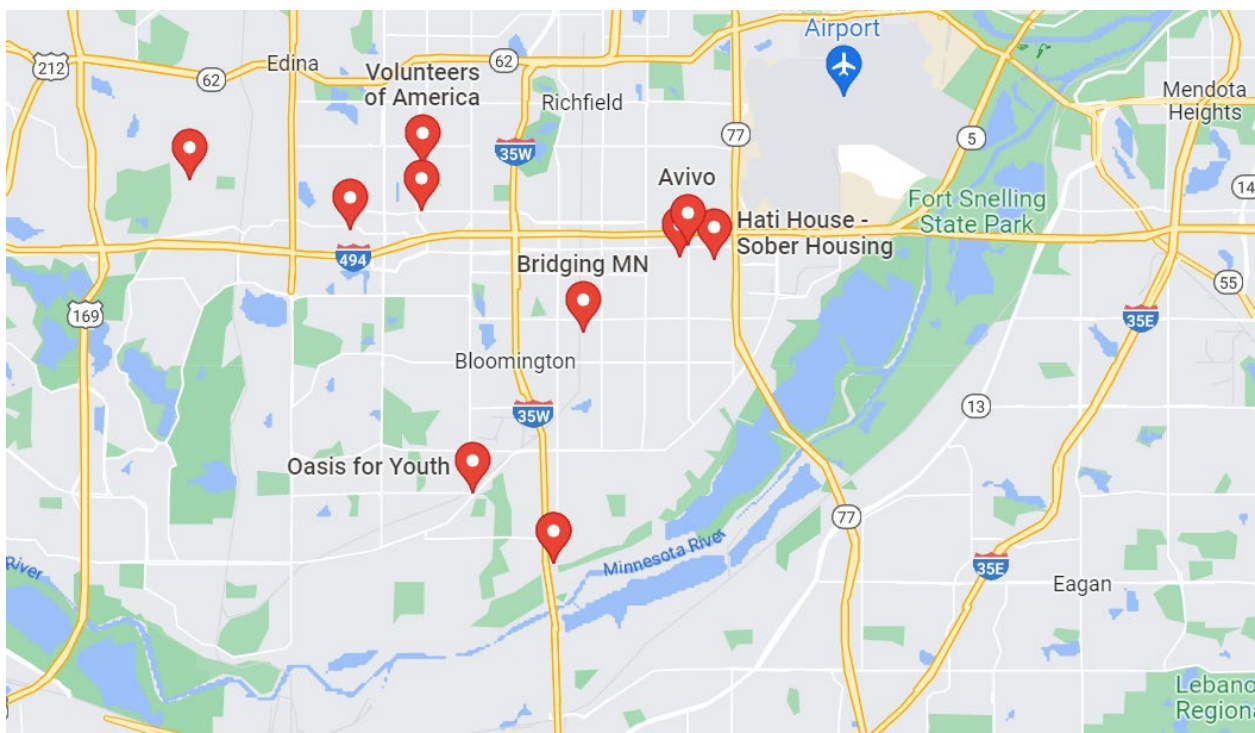
Population	89,298
Median Household Income	\$80,582
Per Capita Income in past 12 months	\$44,164
Median Gross Rent	\$1,304
Persons in Poverty	8.1%
Occupied Units with no vehicle available	7.4%
Rental vacancy rate	3.6%
Persons with a disability, under age 65 years (2017-2021)	8.2%
Occupied housing units lacking complete kitchen facilities	2%
Occupied housing units lacking complete plumbing facilities	1.6%



## INVENTORY OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

There are several organizations offering services to individuals at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness in the city of Bloomington. Additionally, many services are available from organizations in neighboring cities, many of which offer their services in Bloomington.

Bloomington's housing and homelessness services include housing providers, community and nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, educational institutions, healthcare providers and funders. The section below provides information on some of the existing community resources for people experiencing homelessness obtained through the organization's websites, annual reports and/or stakeholder interviews. The information below does not provide an all-inclusive listing of all available resources in the city of Bloomington or Hennepin County.



### CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

The city of Bloomington provides some support related to homelessness and collaborates with Bloomington Public Schools, through the McKinney-Vento coordinator, Hennepin County, and community-based organizations to meet the needs of residents.

#### Hotel Housing Through the Temporary Pandemic Housing Permit Program

The Bloomington City Council unanimously adopted a resolution allowing Temporary Pandemic Housing in February 2021. This resolution allowed flexibility from the zoning code to allow service providers and qualifying partner hotels to provide emergency shelter services for the homeless. This



temporary measure was tied to the Governor’s Emergency Executive Order 20-01. When the declaration ended, hotels and providers had up to 180 days to cease emergency shelter operations.

Two hotels received a Temporary Pandemic Housing Permit. This permit required an application, which was reviewed by various City of Bloomington departments including Fire, Police, Environmental Health, Building and Inspection, Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and Planning. The Planning Division administered the permit application and coordinated routing the application materials to the various departments.

### Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA)

The Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) offers rental assistance, housing rehabilitation loans, first-time home buyer assistance and other development and redevelopment programs. By helping Bloomington residents who are housing insecure, they contribute to preventing and reducing homelessness in the city.

HRA is governed by a seven-member board appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. The HRA mission is helps provide affordable housing opportunities for those who are not adequately served by the marketplace, coordinates the City’s efforts to preserve existing neighborhoods and promotes development and redevelopment that enhances Bloomington. Resources and information are available along the housing continuum including housing stability, homeownership pathways, housing preservation and supportive services.

The [Bloomington Housing Action Team](#) (formerly known as NOAH Workgroup) is a collaboration of housing advocates, owners or managers of rental properties, renters, HRA Commission members, City Council members, City staff and other stakeholders. The group meets regularly to discuss how to preserve and create affordable housing in Bloomington.

### Eviction Prevention Clinic and Resource Fair

The Bloomington HRA collaborates with the Community Mediation & Restorative Services, Inc and Sakan to provide an eviction prevention clinic and resource fair at which residents can receive free legal aid, help applying for rental assistance, mediation, and support services. Their services contribute to reducing homelessness by helping residents avoid eviction, which sometimes leads to homelessness.

For additional information on the HRA, see the [HRA What We Do Handout](#).

### STABLE HOMES STABLE SCHOOLS

Stable Homes Stable Schools is a program of the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority that partners the city, housing authority, county, and the public schools.

Minneapolis Public Schools social workers identify eligible families at 18 public schools across the city.

There are two facets to the rental assistance being provided:

1. The City of Minneapolis and MPHA jointly fund direct rental assistance to families of elementary students experiencing homelessness. MPHA will administer the rental assistance.
2. A Pohlad Family Foundation grant funds emergency Housing Stability Funds to assist families at risk of eviction or other loss of housing.

Hennepin County and the YMCA also provide essential support services.





## HENNEPIN COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE (COC)

The Continuum of Care (CoC) supports coordination of the countywide effort to prevent and end homelessness. This effort addresses homelessness at all levels. CoC facilitates a number of committees addressing issues related to homelessness and each includes elected officials, housing and service providers, advocates, people who've experienced homelessness, and cross-sector partners.

The CoC offers a Coordinated Community Plan to prevent and end youth homelessness in Hennepin County, which includes input from a broad range of stakeholders made up of non-profit youth agencies, government entities, local education agencies, the Heading Home Hennepin Executive Committee, and youth and young adults.

The CoC manages the centralized process that coordinates the intake, assessment, and referrals for people experiencing homelessness to access homeless dedicated housing in Hennepin County. They also track the availability of homeless dedicated beds and connect people experiencing homelessness to those spaces. The CoC has multiple programs and divisions, also including Streets to Housing, which provides trauma-informed, housing-focused services that reduce barriers and identify safe, appropriate alternatives to living outside, including emergency shelter and permanent housing. The Streets to Housing team works with single adults, youth, and families who are living outside, in their vehicles, or other places unsheltered and not meant for human habitation.

Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department Housing Stabilization Services (HSS) supports people with disabilities or disabling conditions (and their families) and seniors. They provide housing transition services that help people plan for, find and move into housing, as well as housing sustaining services to help people maintain their housing, and consultation services to help those without a Medical Assistance case manager develop a plan for living in the community.

Hennepin Waypoint is a digital, mobile-friendly directory that connects people experiencing homelessness or extreme financial hardship to services they need. Service providers in Bloomington and other areas of the county can add their services to the app online by registering at <https://register.hennepin.us/>. People experiencing homelessness or any interested person can [access the Hennepin Waypoint website](#) on a desktop, tablet, or smart phone without downloading an application.

## INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

### UNITED WAY 2-1-1

United Way 2-1-1 provides a free, confidential service for Minnesotans to access information about eviction resources, food, housing and shelter, alcohol and drug abuse and other services related to homelessness, health, and human service needs. 2-1-1 call specialists engage, assess, and refer callers to appropriate resources based on eligibility requirements for each program. They are available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week by calling 2-1-1.





## AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDERS

### COMMON BOND COMMUNITIES (ST. PAUL, SERVING STATEWIDE)

CommonBond Communities provides privately owned rental housing that is made available to low-income individuals and families at reduced rates based on a contract between HUD or the state. They integrate services with housing, provide homes and services for more than 12,000 people every year. They develop, own, or manage more than 6,000 affordable rental apartments and townhomes throughout 58 cities in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. See <https://commonbond.org> for more information.

### HOUSINGLINK

HousingLink's mission is connecting people to affordable rental homes, increasing choice and access for all. HousingLink provides vacancy information as well as training and support to housing service agencies. HousingLink has become Minnesota's primary source for affordable housing-related openings, data, information, and resources. Visit [housinglink.org](https://housinglink.org) for more information.

## SUPPORTED HOUSING PROVIDERS

### HATI HOUSE SOBER HOUSING

HATI House serves up to 24 residents in a stable housing facility in Bloomington. They offer substance use treatment and mental health services in a residential setting. They provide 24-hour supervision and special services to clients as needed. Our program is committed to maintaining sobriety, providing independent living skills, and helping in goal setting for residents. More information is available at <https://hatihousemn.com>.

### HOUSING FIRST MINNESOTA FOUNDATION (VETERAN-FOCUSED)

The Housing First Minnesota Foundation is the charitable arm of Housing First Minnesota, an association of builders, remodelers, suppliers, and trade partners, and is a nonprofit 501c(3) organization composed of supporters who contribute and volunteer their expertise and time to end homelessness. The Foundation is the HomeAid Minnesota affiliate of HomeAid America, a leading national nonprofit provider of housing and resources for people experiencing homelessness, operating through a network of 19 chapters in 13 states.

Housing for Heroes: a program of Housing First Minnesota that provides transitional housing to serve Veteran men experiencing homelessness.

In Bloomington, the Housing for Heroes program offers a safe space for veterans as they work with the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) to receive support and resources to move into independent living. One home, located on a lot donated by the Bloomington HRA, was the third Housing for Heroes project completed with the Foundation.





## SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

### AVIVO (MINNEAPOLIS, SERVING HENNEPIN COUNTY)

Avivo serves more than 11,000 individuals each year; helping them achieve recovery, find housing stability, and achieve employment and economic advancement. They specialize in helping individuals and families who face complex barriers – poverty, homelessness, unemployment, chemical addiction, or mental health concerns – achieve recovery and economic stability. Avivo provides a holistic approach to providing chemical and mental health services, career education, and employment services. They work to end homelessness by providing education and training, supporting recovery and mental health, and preparing their clients for employment. More information is available at <https://avivomn.org/>.

### BEACON COMMUNITY CARE

Beacon Community Care is a home care service provider in Bloomington. They provide clients with home and community-based health care services and housing stabilization services to help people with disabilities and older adults find affordable housing. More information is available at [beaconcommunitycare.com](http://beaconcommunitycare.com).

### STREETS TO HOUSING PROGRAM (HENNEPIN COUNTY)

Hennepin County residents who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness can get troubleshooting help, assessment, and housing navigation support through the Streets to Housing program. Streets to Housing works with single adults, youth, and families who are living outside, in their vehicles, or other places unsheltered and not meant for human habitation.

The Streets to Housing team provides trauma-informed, housing-focused services that reduce barriers and identify safe, appropriate alternatives to living outside, including emergency shelter and permanent housing. Visit [www.hennepin.us](http://www.hennepin.us) or email [streets.to.housing@hennepin.us](mailto:streets.to.housing@hennepin.us).

## OTHER SERVICES

### BRIDGING MN

Bridging's mission is to empower people to thrive in their homes by providing quality furniture and household goods for those pursuing housing stability. Basic home essential packages of donated goods are provided by Bridging. Typical items include beds and linens, upholstered furniture, dressers, kitchen and dining essentials, lamps, and small appliances. Visit [Bridging.org](http://Bridging.org) for more information.

### BRIDGE TO BENEFITS

Bridge to Benefits is a project by Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota to improve the well-being of families and individuals by linking them to public work support programs and tax credits. By answering a few simple questions, you will be able to see if you or someone else may be eligible for public work support programs. This tool is easy, free, and confidential. Visit [BridgeforBenefits.org](http://BridgeforBenefits.org) for more information.





## COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP OF HENNEPIN COUNTY (CAP-HC)

CAP-HC is a state and federally certified Community Action agency that serves the residents of Hennepin County. CAP-HC has an array of community-centered programs and services, including Energy Assistance, Water Assistance, Financial Literacy, Vehicle Repair Program, Rental Assistance, and Homebuyer Services. The agency develops partnerships to address poverty while creating avenues of self-sufficiency for individuals and families. Visit [caphennepin.org](http://caphennepin.org)

## CORNERSTONE ADVOCACY SERVICE

Cornerstone offers domestic violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, and crime victimization services. They have locations in Bloomington, Brooklyn Center and Minneapolis and partner with numerous organizations to provide seamless advocacy for people seeking help.

They offer telehealth for therapy clients, online, interactive violence prevention presentations for students, as well as in-person and online services. Visit <https://cornerstonemn.org/> for more information about their services.

## DISABILITY HUB MN

Disability Hub MN is a free statewide resource network that helps residents navigate the system and plan for the future. They provide assistance navigating community resources and government programs. Visit [disabilityhubmn.org](http://disabilityhubmn.org) or call 1-866-333-2466

## VEAP

VEAP's mission is to create pathways to stronger, more hopeful communities through access to healthy food, housing stability, and supportive services. VEAP provides access to high quality, healthy, and fresh foods for individuals, families, children, and seniors experiencing hunger or food insecurity. VEAP's Social Services Department supports members of our community in accessing resources to alleviate short-term emergency needs. Case managers and social workers work collaboratively with families to address both immediate and longer-term areas of need. Visit [VEAP.org](http://VEAP.org) for more information or to connect with a VEAP team member.

## VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA

Volunteers of America is in Edina and Minneapolis, and provides services to children, youth and families, older adults, people with disabilities, and people reentering society after incarceration. More information is available at <https://www.voa.org/affiliates/volunteers-of-america-minnesota-and-wisconsin/>.

## YOUTH AND TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

### OASIS FOR YOUTH

Oasis for Youth's mission is the trusted resource committed to elevating youth in their community. Oasis for Youth operates a drop-in Resource Center for youth ages 16-24. Resources and outreach are targeted toward youth who live, work, or attend school in Bloomington, Richfield, and Edina, however, no youth in need are turned away. Oasis for Youth meets the needs of youth through individualized





case management, connections to resources, improved access to services and supports, and assistance with basic needs.

Oasis operates a Resource Center that offers:

- ❖ Free Clothes Closet and hygiene/personal care products.
- ❖ On-site legal aid by Youth Law Project.
- ❖ Health, wellness, and parenting support from Bloomington Public Health.
- ❖ Referrals to federal, county, and local services and assistance with system navigation.
- ❖ Referrals to shelter and housing programs including the Suburban Host Home Program.
- ❖ Rental assistance.
- ❖ Case Management and goal planning.
- ❖ On-site mental health counseling by Headway
- ❖ Food resources.
- ❖ Laundry and showers.
- ❖ Computer lab and internet access with job-search assistance, and educational support.
- ❖ Transportation assistance.

More information about Oasis's services, mission and staff is available at [OasisforYouth.org](https://OasisforYouth.org).



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## STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

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In this section, we explore how key stakeholders in the community perceive homelessness and the need for housing and other solutions.

### Needs of People Experiencing Homelessness

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Many of the stakeholders interviewed said that the need for affordable housing options is driving the increase in homelessness. Others also cited the need for improved mental and behavioral health services. One respondent said that affordable housing is such a large need in Hennepin County that “chipping away” at small pieces of the problem is the best providers can hope to do.

Several of the interview respondents mentioned the success of the program that provided hotel rooms for people experiencing homelessness under the 145A statute. One respondent said that this program shined a spotlight on the problem of homelessness that had previously been less noticed by the public. Several offered this program as an example of what could be accomplished with an innovative approach to existing legislation and infrastructure.

### Target Populations

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Most stakeholders agreed that Bloomington provides adequate services for transitional youth, largely due to the presence of Oasis for Youth in the city of Bloomington. The needs of elders are seen as being more problematic, as one respondent said, “fixed incomes are not keeping up with costs, leaving this population vulnerable to housing insecurity.” Another respondent said that some of Bloomington’s elderly live in substandard housing in need of basic repair.

A place for women experiencing homelessness is also a need for the city. The only shelter currently available in Bloomington is for domestic violence survivors.

Veterans have an array of services available to them and generally are seen as having adequate services. A few respondents described the service coverage for Veterans as “excellent.”

One respondent noted that the city of Bloomington does a good job of working with the chronically homeless population, partly as a result of using a housing first approach to reduce rough sleeping and chronic homelessness.

### Service Coverage: Strengths and Gaps in Service

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Interview informants were asked to rate the services provided to various populations within the homeless community as excellent, adequate, or insufficient. Responses indicate veterans are best served in comparison to transitional youth, elders, families, or those experiencing chronic homelessness.

Services for single adults and seniors approached an adequate rating, whereas services for families, the chronically and unsheltered homeless, transition age youth fell halfway between insufficient and adequate. One respondent described how many in the community have intergenerational ties yet struggle to live in the community where they grew up.



The lack of low-barrier or no-barrier emergency homeless shelter in Bloomington was mentioned by several of the informants. Residents experiencing homelessness who are seeking emergency shelter need to attain transportation to a neighboring city such as Minneapolis or St. Paul.

#### Community Attitudes toward Homelessness

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One interview respondent, who works in law enforcement, noted the “care and compassion” provided by police officers when working with people experiencing homelessness. An additional respondent described residents as being concerned about increasing theft and petty crime, which they associate with rising homelessness.

#### Priority Actions

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One respondent suggested targeting the greatest risk and most acute need areas. Another suggested targeting partnerships with school-based efforts and seizing the opportunity to identify families at risk. The need for a -low-barrier or no-barrier emergency shelter in Bloomington was discussed by several respondents, however they also acknowledged barriers to the development of such a project, as well as the preference for finding long-term housing solutions for Bloomington residents experiencing homelessness.



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## STUDY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Preventing Homelessness

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Preventing homelessness is an important part of any plan to combat homelessness in a community. Prevention efforts should focus on residents that would otherwise become homeless or re-enter homelessness without intervention. The city might explore collaborating with the schools to implement a program similar to the Stable Homes Stable Schools pilot program being implemented in Minneapolis.

### Emergency and Temporary Shelter

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People in a housing crisis will always need a safe and decent place to go immediately. Emergency and temporary shelters fill the immediate need of shelter and provide a safe place to sleep for people experiencing homelessness, as well as instantly connecting them with housing and support services.

Low-barrier shelters provide a safe shelter for all people, many of whom may not have any other place to go. They do not require sobriety, attendance at religious services, minimum income requirements or lack of a criminal history. Family members and partners can stay together, and even pets are often welcomed. Providing a low-barrier emergency shelter plays an important role within an effective, housing-focused response to homelessness. Low-barrier shelters serve as a platform to link people experiencing homelessness to housing through identification and assessment. Once the immediate need of shelter is met, people can be navigated toward permanent housing.

In the absence of the funding available for a year-round emergency shelter, the city might consider the feasibility of an inclement weather shelter or a continuation of the successful use of hotel rooms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Transportation

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Given that many people experiencing homelessness in Bloomington need to go to other cities for services, safe and reliable two-way transportation may assist them in gaining services. In recent years, transit agencies have begun to look more at connecting people experiencing homelessness with housing assistance and other services through outreach and engagement in lieu of costly arrests or law enforcement interactions. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) says that addressing homelessness in local communities requires leveraging partnerships with other community services such as transportation and social service providers.

APTA recommends that transit agencies implement strategies to address homelessness including aligning transit service with social service destinations, which may be operated free of charge. Depending on the locations of those services, the city should consider operating a fare-free route. APTA also suggests cities partner with the business community to identify funding opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lacy Bell (Sound Transit), Gabriel Beltran (DART), Elayne Berry (MARTA), Derik Calhoun (AC Transit), Tera Hankins (BART), and Laura Hester (NJ Transit); American Public Transportation Association (2018, Sept 19) *Public Transit and Social Responsibility: Homelessness*. Accessed at: [https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Transit\\_Responses\\_Homeless/REPORT-2018-Leadership-APTA-Team-4-Public-Transit-and-Social-Responsibility.pdf](https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Transit_Responses_Homeless/REPORT-2018-Leadership-APTA-Team-4-Public-Transit-and-Social-Responsibility.pdf)



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## Advocacy

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Homelessness impacts our social and economic systems. Strengthening advocacy to fight the root causes of homelessness while also addressing the shortcomings of the current assistance services is fundamental to reducing and ending homelessness in the community.

Advocacy can help gain new and increased resources, as well as change local policies or laws to better combat homelessness in the community. People engage in a variety of activities to advocate and engage the community and lawmakers to bring needed change. By taking an active role in the planning and implementation of county-wide services, Bloomington can help shape those services and ensure that its residents' needs are considered.

## Public Education and Community Engagement Initiative

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A public awareness initiative is a marketing effort that increases public awareness and recognition of a problem. These initiatives target many people in the community to generate specific outcomes. They can contribute to policy changes by putting increased pressure on policymakers and encouraging the community to act against the problem. These initiatives further inform the community by providing information, education, and solutions on the issue, which is vital in creating actions to make change.