

# STATE OF HOMELESSNESS



Everywhere I go these days, I am asked about homelessness in Louisville. Specifically, people want to know why they are seeing more and more people sleeping on the sidewalks of our community and how they can help. Anyone who knows me well, knows that my answer as with most things is that it is complicated.

Thousands of Louisvillians have experienced homelessness for years as a result of decreases in federal resources for affordable housing coupled with stagnant incomes. Most of these people do not sleep outdoors, but often those who do sleep in camps that are hidden from view.

Over the past several years, though, Louisville has seen positive development in parks, sports venues, and more throughout downtown. While these efforts are positive for the majority of our citizens, they have displaced people hidden in camps and abandoned buildings. With even more to come in additional downtown spaces, I expect this displacement will continue.

It is also important to note that sleeping outside is dangerous and uncomfortable. When people without resources see a spot where others are camping away from the elements, with lighting to deter crime and rodents, they see these sites as safer. As people age and spend time sleeping out, they also become sicker and seek locations with easy access to hospitals and medical facilities. And our country, and Louisville with it, is in the midst of a drug crisis where some people have cycled through addiction to the point of losing everything except the need for drugs and are locating where people are taking advantage of their addiction.

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These are issues we all must work together to address upstream, but as the Executive Director of the Coalition for the Homeless, I believe the first step to addressing the symptom of homelessness is to create a safety net that allows us to simply offer everyone a safe place to come in.



Photo by Michael L. Jones, [insiderlouisville.com](http://insiderlouisville.com)

Thanks to efforts led by Councilwoman Barbara Sexton-Smith and Councilman Bill Hollander, I hope to see this belief become a reality. Metro Council is [allocating \\$546,791](#) to provide “low barrier” shelter to Louisville’s homeless. Low barrier refers to the ease of shelter entry. The goal is to remove as many barriers to entry as possible including admitting people who are under the influence, people of any family make-up and people with medical needs.

In order to do this, we need multiple locations to allow housing for different groups and lots of services to address everyone’s needs. Along with shelter funding, Louisville Metro and partners have awarded a contract to the University of Louisville to study the issue of street homelessness, best practices from other communities, and which of the

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efforts we enact this winter should be expanded so that this effort can continue long-term based on what we know works.

But we need everyone to do what they can to make lasting change.

The Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels is leading the charge by donating \$25,000 and issuing a community challenge to fundraise additional dollars to keep everyone who is homeless safe. This funding will increase services to everyone on the streets now, and provide funding to transition the efforts we find to be most successful into on-going programming.

Donate to the Coalition for the Homeless at [www.louhomeless.org/donate](http://www.louhomeless.org/donate) or mail your designated check to 1300 S. 4th St, Suite 250, Louisville, KY 40208. We can reach the goal of matching the allocation made by Metro Louisville if everyone gives what they can to make change.



I know that many want to do even more to address the suffering of others. Louisville has seen a huge outpouring of compassion to those living in visible camps downtown but some of these efforts have inadvertently caused new problems. So many people are bringing boxes and bags of items to share that the homeless are unable to use them all.

To continue to support those on the streets with items they need now, please connect with some of the city's amazing outreach teams that serve those on our streets every day and can guide your efforts through wish lists and opportunities for distribution. You

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can reach out through Facebook to [The Forgotten Louisville](#) and [Fed with Faith](#), who coordinate with many other outreach teams.

This is a challenge our community can address together. Please follow us [on Facebook](#) or see [our website](#) for additional opportunities, including the upcoming [Give-A-Jam to End Homelessness](#) this Thursday (buy tickets online [here](#)) and the [Street Count](#) on 1/31.

Thank you for your compassion, interest, and support.

Natalie



#### **About Us**

The Coalition for the Homeless's mission is to prevent and end homelessness in Louisville through advocacy, education, and the coordination of our 30 member agencies. We have been the lead advocate for Louisville's homeless since 1986, when we were founded by community leaders after several people died on Louisville's streets.

Please stay connected:

- Learn more at our website: [louhomeless.org](http://louhomeless.org)
- Make a gift: [louhomeless.org/donate](http://louhomeless.org/donate)
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Thank you so much for your continued support!

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