



Beacon
INTERFAITH HOUSING COLLABORATIVE

Creating Housing First Homes

Overview

Over the course of a few short months in 2018, what began as a small camp of people grew to more than 300 at the corner of Franklin and Hiawatha avenues in Minneapolis. The encampment – which became known as the Wall of Forgotten Natives – captured the attention of the public, media, and elected officials, and became a highly-visible statement of what we have long known: ***we are falling woefully short in providing the resources needed to address homelessness in our community.***

The encampment highlighted the need for safe, deeply affordable, supportive homes for community members with high needs and very low incomes. For many of the people drawn to the (relative) safety of the encampment, homelessness intersects with economic insecurity, leaving domestic violence, opioid or alcohol addiction, mental health concerns, racism, historic trauma, and many other causes. More than 1,000 people in Hennepin County alone are yearning for a stable place to call home.

It is painfully clear: **we need to build more homes.** As others are working round the clock to meet the immediate needs of people at the encampment, we know from our work that long-term solutions are required if we are to live out our vision that all people have a home. One model that holds promise for people moving from homelessness to stability is known as ‘Housing First.’

What Is a Housing First Model?

Housing First does exactly what it says: ***it provides permanent housing for a person first without requiring them to address other problems they may be facing.***

Beacon is working to fully implement this model at our American House and Kimball Court apartments. This model recognizes that people are more easily engaged in support services and experience greater success once the chaos and health risks of living on the streets have been lifted from their lives. In the Housing First model, the goal is harm reduction—eliminating physical, mental and emotional stresses that come from being without a safe place to live so that residents have a foundation of stability from which they can, if they choose, pursue health treatment, employment, or addiction recovery with the support of on-site professionals.

Beacon believes in a variety of housing responses, because different people need

different options. Housing First is one of several proven approaches we take to ensure that all people experience the dignity of having a home.

Launching Our Housing First Campaign

Beacon's collaborating congregations have discerned that our faith and values call us to respond to the lack of affordable homes and resources for people experiencing homelessness in our community by launching a Housing First campaign.

Together, we will:

1. **Create up to 70 supportive apartment homes** in Minneapolis using a Housing First model.
2. **Build our power** to address policy considerations and increase public will for the campaign.
3. **Contribute most-needed household items** to support people as they move out of the encampment and into homes during the winter of 2018-19.

Creating these 70 apartment homes will include:

1. **Robust commitment from collaborating congregations and leaders** willing to engage in the campaign.
2. **Up to \$1 million (\$15,000 per home)** in seed money from private contributions to launch.
3. **A site in Minneapolis** located and secured with assistance from the city and/or county.
4. **Up to 70 Housing Support vouchers** to provide rental assistance and services.
5. **Approximately \$300,000 per year in additional service funding.**
6. **\$19 million in capital** from public sources to construct the building.

Next Steps in Our Response

As a collaborative of congregations, we embrace the call to respond together to new moments and opportunities. As we unite our prayers, insight, experience, and power in this campaign, we turn again to the values that unite us:

Collaboration | Risk-taking | Race Equity | Inclusive decision-making

Based on these values, we will respond boldly and with the urgency this moment demands. We will bring this campaign to our congregations for discernment and inspire them to say 'yes' to making a long-term commitment. We will grow the financial capacity needed to launch these essential homes. We will invest the time to expand our understanding of the structural issues that led to the encampment and the societal response it will take to the racism in housing. We will talk with our neighbors about the need we see, talk with our elected officials about why we expect them to rise to this moment and respond in meaningful ways. And we will enthusiastically embrace once more our stated, shared vision: **all people have a home.**