



STATEMENT CONCERNING DENVER'S UNHOUSED AND 5-YEAR HOUSING PLAN



Decades of policy decisions have eliminated support for people suffering from poverty, mental health concerns, and addiction. These challenges cannot be solved overnight, but efforts to address them must be accelerated to provide immediate, near-term, and sustaining support.

A growing group of diverse community groups including registered neighborhood organizations (RNOs), business improvement districts (BIDs) and general improvement districts (GIDs) have come together to form the Unhoused Action Coalition (UAC). UAC members hear a range of feedback from our constituents in response to the housing crisis, including frustration at the extent of unsanctioned campgrounds, fears for personal security, empathy for those sleeping on Denver's streets and myriad additional concerns.

UAC groups have coalesced around shared vision to support the interests of their constituents and work for the common good throughout the Mile High City. Central to this is developing a humane strategy to support those in our communities who do not, for whatever reason, have access to permanent housing. The UAC believes that this strategy must address long term housing goals and, most importantly, provide an implementable and immediate blueprint to transition those sleeping on the streets of Denver from unsanctioned to sanctioned temporary accommodation.

The UAC recognizes the great work being undertaken by many front-line City employees and applauds their efforts. However, the absence of a comprehensive approach that spans the full continuum of homelessness hinders these efforts--starting long before people find themselves sleeping on city streets and concluding when they have secured permanent housing and sustainable employment. The UAC believes that considerable emphasis is being given to the creation of affordable housing. This will address the root of this crisis but it may take a generation before material impacts will be felt. The effort to create affordable housing must therefore be contextualized within a package of short and medium-term measures to address the immediate situation.

These measures are not new and are often talked and written about; indeed a number are outlined in the City's own documents. However they require a city-wide effort to make them reality, taking into account City departments, Council, Mayor's office, and the goodwill and support of individual citizens and neighborhood groups. We recognize that Denver's Office of Housing Stability (HOST) has a strategic plan. Still, we see a lack of urgency and actionable plan for "housing first" solutions to move the unhoused out of unsanctioned camps immediately.

A key objective of the UAC is to build this neighborhood cooperation and support for city-wide solutions. We therefore implore the City to implement, with urgency, the following actions:

- Implement the cross-departmental strategy including partners at CPD, HOST, and the Mayor's office to consolidate existing activities and strategies into one overarching program to address the full homelessness continuum.
- Identify a single point of management, coordination, and contact for all strategies impacting those without permanent shelter. This role is critical to ensuring that individual activities and strategies work effectively within an overarching program.
- Identify, select, and garner neighborhood support for newly initiated Safe Outdoor Spaces (SOS) to transition those sleeping on Denver's streets from unsanctioned to sanctioned locations.
- Make public properties available for SOS sites; advocate for these locations through the City Council approval process.
- Support the development and implementation of other forms of innovative approaches to delivering shelter, such as tiny home villages.
- Place greater value on gathering data on individuals affected by homelessness so that their unique circumstances and needs can be better understood, which is in line with Community Solutions Built For Zero program that the UAC strongly supports.
- Deliver significantly affordable housing (<30% AMI) through tax credits, elimination of onerous requirements, and deploy other financial mechanisms.
- Advance inclusionary zoning opportunities; identify and implement immediate opportunities to onboard housing diversity, including but not limited to the adaptive reuse of existing properties, developing ADUs, construction of multi-dwelling units in other neighborhoods that is fair and equitable throughout Denver.
- Provide a detailed graphic breakdown of how existing City funds are being utilized to support all initiatives associated with homelessness, including the provision of accommodation, services, and strategic planning.
- Partner more with this collective of organizations, as well as others, to support and implement these recommendations.

Denver is at a turning point. Without meaningful change in both tone and outcomes, those without permanent shelter will continue to be stigmatized and those with permanent shelter will become increasingly frustrated. Denver has a renowned reputation for being welcoming, inclusive, and entrepreneurial.

We must live up to this reputation and ensure that these core values extend to all Denverites.

Baker Historic Neighborhood Association | Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, Inc.
Curtis Park Neighbors | Colfax Ave BID
Golden Triangle Creative District | Old San Rafael Neighborhood Organization
RiNo Art District, BID, GID | Uptown on the Hill
West Washington Park Neighborhood Organization

DENVER'S UNHOUSED ACTION COALITION