

# A Community Call to Action to End Homelessness in Greater Lafayette

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## The Moment

The Beyond the Bridge film event revealed both the urgency of homelessness in Greater Lafayette and the community's readiness to act. The film, panel discussion, and public empathy expressed by local mayors generated momentum and a shared desire to move from awareness to action.

This moment presents an opportunity to bring leaders together around a coordinated, long-term strategy focused on **ending homelessness—not simply managing it**.

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## The Challenge

Greater Lafayette has dedicated service providers, housing initiatives, faith communities, health care and behavioral health partners, and public partners working every day. Yet homelessness persists and is becoming more complex as housing costs rise, affordable units remain limited, and systems operate in silos.

Key challenges:

- **Lack of coordination:** No single, cross-sector body exists with a long-term mandate to align strategies, identify gaps, and hold the community accountable.
- **Funding needs:** Ending homelessness at scale will require significant, sustained investment—potentially **\$10 million over time**—to expand housing, services, and prevention.
- **Policy risks:** Proposed legislation criminalizing homelessness could increase public costs, strain systems, and undermine evidence-based solutions.
- **System vulnerability:** Reliance on short-term or federal funding leaves systems exposed to budget cuts, economic shocks, or public health crises.

Without long-term coordination, opportunities for impact are lost and progress remains fragile.

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## What Works

Communities that successfully reduce homelessness share these elements:

- Strong, visible leadership across public, nonprofit, health care, and private sectors
- Shared definitions of success with measurable outcomes
- Alignment between housing, health care, behavioral health, services, prevention, and policy
- Sustainable funding and system resilience

- Ongoing community engagement and accountability

Homelessness is solvable when communities act together with focus and shared responsibility.

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## **The Proposal: A Greater Lafayette Task Force on Homelessness**

The Beyond the Bridge Steering Committee proposes forming a **Greater Lafayette Task Force on Homelessness** to provide coordinated, cross-sector leadership focused on long-term solutions.

The Task Force would:

- Define success, including shared goals, measurable outcomes, and phased milestones from stabilization to long-term prevention
- Align efforts across cities, county government, housing providers, service agencies, health care and behavioral health partners, business, philanthropy, and community stakeholders
- Identify gaps, priorities, and opportunities for investment, coordination, and policy change
- Develop a sustainable, integrated system capable of withstanding federal budget cuts, economic shocks, and public health crises
- Track progress and report transparently to the community

The Task Force would **not**:

- Replace existing agencies or coalitions  
Manage day-to-day program or clinical operations
- Assign blame or create unnecessary bureaucracy

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## **Immediate Next Steps**

- **Host a Community Open Forum (March)** to share the current landscape, introduce the task force, and engage housing, service, and health care and behavioral health partners.
- **Finalize task force structure and leadership**, ensuring alignment with existing committees and trusted sector leaders.
- **Engage expert guidance**, including consultation with James Mathy, Administrator of Milwaukee County Housing Services, to inform strategy, funding, and policy recommendations.

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## **The Ask**

Community leaders, partners, and stakeholders are invited to:

- Endorse the formation of a Greater Lafayette Task Force on Homelessness

- Participate in the open forum and planning process
- Help identify leadership, expertise, and sustainable funding strategies
- Commit to a shared, long-term effort to end homelessness

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## Closing

Greater Lafayette has the compassion, expertise, and commitment needed to end homelessness. The Beyond the Bridge event made one thing clear: **the community is ready.**

Now is the time to align efforts across housing, health care, services, and policy; strengthen collaboration; and commit to durable, evidence-based solutions—for our neighbors today and for the future of our community.

The *Beyond the Bridge* film event revealed both the urgency of homelessness in Greater Lafayette and the community's readiness to act. The powerful film, thoughtful panel discussion, and public empathy expressed by local mayors generated strong momentum and a shared desire to move from awareness to action.

This moment presents a clear opportunity to bring leaders together around a coordinated, long-term approach to **ending homelessness**, not simply managing it.

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