



Investments to End Wichita's Homelessness Crisis

We are a coalition of organizations that make up our community's homeless services system, working together to end homelessness. We write to highlight the urgent need for sustained, evidence-based funding, coordinated implementation, and guidance from local providers. Homelessness already costs our community more than \$20 million annually, a figure that will continue to rise without strategic investment.

We support and believe that the proposed sales tax presents Wichita with an opportunity to end homelessness and address the need for affordable housing.

The Coalition requests that the City of Wichita adopts a balanced approach to using the anticipated \$150m in sales tax dollars to address homelessness in a holistic way:

1. **Restricted special fund** with reinvested earnings to support homeless and housing services, including continued operations at Second Light.
2. **Sustained funding in an Affordable Housing Trust Fund** to spur development of long-term affordable units for people exiting homelessness.
3. **Seven-year funding for Prevention and Stabilization Services** to prevent homelessness and support lasting stability after rehousing.

The Need - Sustainable Funding for Homeless & Housing Services:

- Almost 2,000 households became homeless for the first time in 2025.
- In 2025, the Coalition to End Homelessness served 4,152 people across its street outreach, shelter, and transitional living programs. A blend of Federal grants, local general budget, and philanthropic dollars fund this life-saving system.

The Need - Affordable Housing:

- Over the past 20 years, housing costs have grown twice as fast as wages - rising 140% compared to a 70% increase in pay.
- The [2025 State of ALICE in Kansas](#) found that 72% of employed, low-income renters in Sedgwick County were cost-burdened by their rent. 27,175 households paid more than 30% of their limited income on rent, a significant risk factor for households to enter homelessness.
- Of those served by the Coalition both sheltered or unsheltered in 2025, 43% reentered homelessness from shelter or remained homeless at the start of the new year due to a lack of housing resources.

The Need - Prevention & Stabilization Services:

- Without investment in a path from shelter to self-sufficiency, we'll simply be building and operating bigger shelters each year with no overall decrease in homelessness.
- 2-1-1 reported having 28,129 total calls in Sedgwick County, with 10,311 for rent and utilities support; a reflection of the number of people who are one step away from becoming homeless.

The Coalition to End Homelessness further recommends that these funds are awarded competitively across both government and housing services, and the selection process leverages the expertise of the Coalition to End Homelessness members / staff and the lived experience of people who have been homeless.

Closing Statement

Wichita has an opportunity to transform its homeless response system and create lasting pathways to stability for our most vulnerable neighbors. With strategic investment and coordinated implementation, we can ensure homelessness in Wichita becomes **rare, brief, and non-recurring**.

The Coalition to End Homelessness in Wichita/Sedgwick County, led by United Way of the Plains, works to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring for all our neighbors.