



A Presentation & Discussion on Unhoused Taskforce Recommendations

September 16, 2025

Unhoused Taskforce



- Collaborative Process
 - Developed a shared vision, mission, and actionable goals to support both unhoused residents and the wider Oak Park community.
 - Engaged through open dialogue, innovative problem-solving, and collective accountability.
 - Leveraged the unique strengths of diverse community partners
- Participants Included
 - People with Lived Experience
 - Business Districts
 - Non-profits
 - Police Department
 - Oak Park Residents
 - Taxing Bodies

Goals



Less chronic
homelessness in
Oak Park

Access to basic
needs for people
waiting to access
shelter/housing

A clear role for all
community
members in
combating
homelessness in
Oak Park



Immediate Action Items

Items that staff recommends the Village tackle right away

Support emergency shelter operations



- **Background**

- **Housing Forward currently operates at 38 N. Austin**
- **Appx. 20 beds**
- **Expanded shelter set to open within a few weeks at 112 N. Humphrey**
 - **Increase to 40+ beds**
 - **20 beds prioritized for unhoused households in Oak Park**
 - **5-10 beds set-aside for walk-ins each night**
- **Expanded shelter funded through mix of County and Village funding**
 - **County: \$250,000 for capital costs**
 - **Village: \$314,365 for both operating and capital**
 - **(\$119,365 capital costs/ \$195,015 operating)**

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Support emergency shelter operations



- **Issue:**
 - **State operational funding for 2026 uncertain**



- **Solution**
 - **Village to provide operational funding for 2026 if state funding does not come through**
 - **Estimated cost of \$400k to \$500k**

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Support critical transportation



- **Issue:**

- **Need for transportation support for unhoused to critical sites**
 - Health Care
 - Counseling
 - Housing opportunities

- **Solution**

- **Will be addressed through E.C.H.O. pilot**
 - Lyft/Uber account to support rides to designated locations
 - Estimated at \$5k per year

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Access to basic needs for
people waiting for
access to shelter

Improve street outreach coordination



- **Issue**

- **Opportunity to build off E.C.H.O. leadership to enhance coordination on cross-agency response to unhoused individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in Oak Park.**

- **Solution**

- **E.C.H.O. to take on coordination of “street outreach” meetings to focus them on specific conversations about addressing individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in Oak Park. This could include:**
 - **Adding members of the “core team” that discuss case details.**
 - **Increasing meeting frequency for a “core team.”**

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Public Restroom



- **Issue**

- **The lack of bathroom access for all people in downtown is challenging for everyone.**
- **The lack of bathroom access creates negative neighborhood impacts due to the number of unhoused individuals.**
- **Location/signage make it tough to know bathroom availability.**

- **Solution**

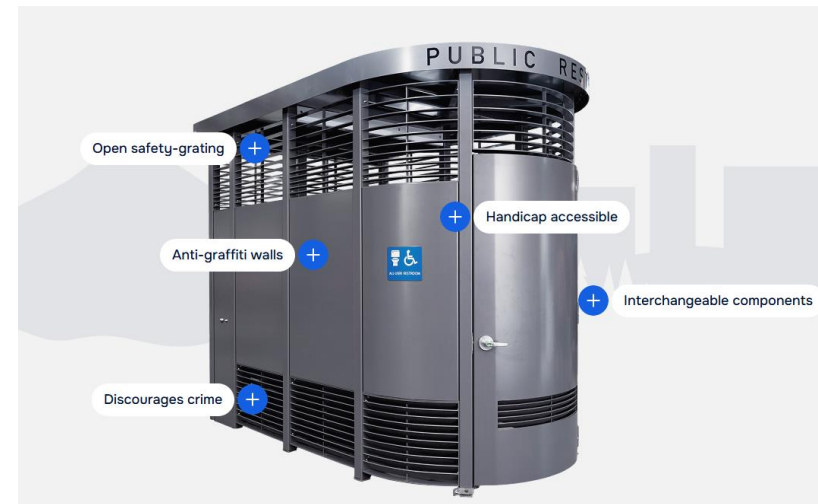
- **The Village provides a public restroom in downtown.**

Access to basic needs for
people waiting to access
shelter

Public Restroom



Type of Unit	Cost to Purchase	Cost to Install	Annual Maintenance	10-year total cost
Portland Loo (1)	\$195,010	\$250,000	\$10,100	\$502,010
Thorne Lab (1)	\$0	\$0	\$103,175	\$1,031,749
Expanded porta-potties (3)	\$0	\$0	\$7,776	\$103,175



Modify cleaning protocols



- **Current approach**
 - **Initial E.C.H.O. touchpoint when someone found camping**
 - **Notified of community standards (cleanliness, drug use, etc.).**
 - **Camping locations cleaned on Wednesday mornings, requiring temporary relocation.**
 - **If community standards violated, 7 days for individuals to relocate OR clean up the situation.**
 - **Removed after 7 days if the violations remain.**

Access to basic needs for
people waiting to access
shelter

Modify cleaning protocols



- **Issue**

- **No standards for camping near business entrances.**
- **Questions about whether 7-day violation period is too long.**
- **Need for increased cleaning frequency.**
- **Clarification of when individuals can resume camping in a location after removal due to violations.**

- **Solution**

- **Add 25-foot buffer from business entrance.**
- **Locations with violations must remain clear of camping for 2 weeks.**
- **Explore increased cleaning frequency.**

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Medium Action Items

Ideas that staff will work on with partners to flesh out

Rental assistance coordination



- **Issue**

- **Households must go multiple places and apply multiple times to access emergency rental assistance.**
 - **Housing Forward: Flexible Rental Assistance and Crisis Housing Rental Support**
 - **Oak Park Township: General Assistance and Emergency Assistance**
- **Confusion about when and where to refer folks in need.**

- **Solution**

- **Explore a partnership between Oak Park Twp. and the Village of Oak Park for centralized administration of future emergency rental assistance programs.**

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A clear role for all
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Housing Navigation & Mitigation



- **Issue**

- **Housing providers do not want to offer housing to those exiting homelessness, perceiving them as risky financially.**
- **Lack of affordable housing generally makes it hard to rehouse individuals.**
- **Fewer new individuals can use the emergency and interim shelter options because it takes current occupants a long time to find housing.**

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Housing Navigation & Mitigation



- **Solution**

- **Explore with partners funding for added a Housing Navigator at Housing Forward to help folks find housing.**
- **E.C.H.O. to support Housing Forward staff in housing clients that are not connected to vouchers.**
- **Goal of reducing dwell time in the Write Inn.**
- **Include tools to encourage housing provider participation**
 - **Vacancy payments**
 - **Renewal bonuses**
 - **Risk mitigation fund**

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Street Outreach Expansion



- **Issue**

- **Community coverage gaps in street outreach evenings and Sundays, critical times when individuals are looking to find shelter and support**
 - **E.C.H.O. provides support weekdays during work hours**
 - **Housing Forward provides one FTE of street outreach in Oak Park weekdays during work hours**
 - **Oak Park beat coverage is Tuesday through Saturday during the days in downtown**

- **Solution**

- **Explore how the Village and various governmental partners could expand street outreach in conjunction with other needed services (short-term housing stays, addiction counseling, basic needs, etc.).**

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Education & Outreach



- **Issue**

- **Community confusion about homelessness, resources, and their role in addressing the issue.**
- **Greater support for businesses in homelessness response.**

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Education & Outreach



- **Solution**

- **Ask the Homeless Coalition to expand its work on community education on homelessness.**
- **Increase business involvement in all aspects of Coalition, especially the core team.**
- **Hold multiple trainings held for business owners a year on homelessness to better support their needs.**
- **Encourage business associations to pursue their own methods of supporting homelessness response.**
- **Conduct a multi-year community campaign to educate residents on homelessness, resources, and their role in addressing the issue.**

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Shelter



- **Issue**

- **The expanded emergency shelter in Oak Park remains the only one within the Housing Forward service area.**
- **Chronically homeless individuals, particularly those with mental illness, may choose not to access traditional emergency shelters.**

- **Solution**

- **Explore partnerships with nearby communities to create a low-barrier to entry shelter, like the Safe Haven model.**

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Discussion