

# INTERIM STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

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**NASHVILLE  
OCTOBER 2025**

Findings and  
recommendations  
from an independent  
community working  
group of service  
providers, advocates,  
and researchers



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The most effective solution to ending homelessness remains providing permanent housing with ongoing support. While Nashville has invested in temporary, permanent, and emergency housing for individuals and families, the supply of permanent options has not kept up with the demand. Therefore, creative interim strategies to respond to unsheltered homelessness are needed.

This report highlights findings and recommendations from a 10-week working group composed of service providers and community members. Top-line takeaways include the need to create more hotel/motel conversions, to convene faith communities and explore ways to creatively use their land, and advocating with metro council to champion interim strategies in their own districts.

“Homelessness is not a personal failure nor a criminal act—it’s a systemic one. Too many leaders still cling to the myth that homelessness stems from laziness, addiction, or poor choices. But, it’s really driven by structural inequities: lack of affordable housing, underpaid labor, inaccessible healthcare, and racialized poverty.”

- Formerly unhoused community member

It’s never been more important to advocate for permanent, life-saving housing resources and solutions. We must also lower barriers to existing interim options and work collectively and strategically to mobilize existing community resources that will have the largest impact in our city. The lives and well-being of thousands of our neighbors are at stake and demand that we act.

# BACKGROUND

Unsheltered homelessness has become more visible and prevalent across the nation. This has prompted lawmakers in states like Tennessee to pass aggressive and misguided measures that punish visible homelessness but fail to address root causes and invest in proven solutions. Federal funding for housing and vital services are increasingly at risk of being eliminated or significantly reduced. As places people could stay are fenced and cleared, communities are coming together to work on innovative, evidence-based strategies for short and long term change. (See Appendix A for data on homelessness in Nashville.)

## From July through September, working group members

- Developed **guiding principles** to steer our work. Those included an ultimate focus on permanent housing, the inclusion of directly impacted people, and values of safety, dignity, health, autonomy, and effectiveness. (See Appendix B)
- Created **Nashville's Interim Options: Models, Inventory & Asset Mapping** that includes (1) an inventory of existing interim strategies, along with bed availability and potential barriers to entry; (2) a list of additional strategies and models from national partners; and (3) an asset map to highlight existing resources in Nashville. **Visit:** [bit.ly/InterimOptionsNash](https://bit.ly/InterimOptionsNash). (see Appendix C).
- Created and **implemented a survey** in order to center the voices and feedback of people with lived experience of homelessness. (see Appendix D)
- **Explored innovative, evidence-based interim strategies** from across the nation that have been highlighted by national partners.
- Analyzed the strengths, opportunities, concerns of key interim strategies.

## WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Lindsey Krinks and Allie Wallace — Open Table Nashville, Beth Shinn and Abby Kiesow — Vanderbilt, Kennetha Patterson — Consumer Advisory Board, Council Member Jacob Kupin, Rori Knight Durham — HUD TA, Meredith MacLeod Jaulin — Shower the People, Ryan LaSuer — Community Care Fellowship, Jesse Call — The Village at Glenclyff, Courtney Berner — Oasis, HG Stovall — Launch Pad, and April Calvin, Marvin Trotter, Allison Cantway, and Raquel De La Hueraga — Office of Homeless Services

# CHOICES

## INVENTORY OF EXISTING OPTIONS

### Existing Strategies

Our working group took inventory of existing strategies currently being utilized in Nashville. We noted availability, barriers, strengths, and concerns about these models, as well as the perspectives of people with lived experience.

### Tiny Home Communities:

Temporary living arrangements in small, private units. Green Street Church tiny homes and The Village at Glencliff are examples.

- **Strengths:** private space to stay, potential to be pet friendly, access to supportive services, lower construction costs, more approachable option for people transitioning from living outdoors to indoors
- **Concerns:** land availability, small scale (not enough units), ongoing maintenance costs, environmental concerns (e.g., flooding)

### Creative Use of Motel Rooms:

This interim option provides individuals or families with short-term housing in private rooms/units, each with its own bathroom. In Nashville, Hospitality Hub and Safe Haven are both examples funded by the Metro Office of Homeless Services (OHS).

- **Strengths:** uses existing infrastructure; private space, plumbing, electricity, storage; ADA accessibility, fire safety standards, community with other residents, a popular model gaining traction with developers
- **Concerns:** high operating and renovation costs (maintenance and ongoing operational costs) affordability barriers, limited availability

### VOICES:

"I like hotels because they are cool and quiet and calm. People have their own spaces." -current resident of an interim strategy option

# CHOICES

## INVENTORY OF EXISTING OPTIONS

### **Creative Use of Faith Community Spaces:**

Faith communities may repurpose their facilities or property to provide resources to individuals experiencing homelessness. Examples include Green Street Church tiny homes, Community Care Fellowship, Launch Pad, and The Village at Glencliff. Three of these interventions are currently funded by OHS.

- **Strengths:** uses existing infrastructure and property, a lot of faith community land in Nashville, land is exempt from certain zoning regulations that create housing barriers, potential to partner with churches for funding
- **Concerns:** cost of new construction and renovations, staffing needs, additional training and equipping for faith communities, community resistance (NIMBYism)

### **Medical Respite:**

Short-term residential care for those experiencing homelessness who are not able to stay inpatient in a hospital. Room in the Inn and The Village at Glencliff are examples in Nashville, both currently funded by OHS.

- **Strengths:** cheaper than hospital inpatient care, provides safe space for recovery, improves health outcomes
- **Concerns:** requires medical staff, only an option for those in need of medical care

“It would feature culturally sensitive, individualized support, allowing residents to maintain autonomy and dignity while providing the necessary resources to address the root causes of their homelessness.”  
-formerly unhoused community member

# CHOICES

## EXPLORATION OF ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

### New Strategies for Consideration:

Our working group explored new strategies that are being utilized across the country and highlighted by national partners, but are not currently implemented in Nashville.

### Safe Parking Sites:

Designated areas where individuals and families can safely park their vehicles overnight. These sites have various features such as toilets, hand-washing stations, showers, Wi-Fi, child care, documentation services, and more.

- **Strengths:** provides way to meet the high need for safe places to park, low-cost solution, uses existing parking lots, potential to rotate among existing parking lots
- **Concerns:** finding willing parking lots, ongoing supportive service costs, limited to vehicle owners, environmental concerns (e.g. extreme heat, cold, flooding), community resistance, vehicles breaking down on-site

“Some of us have cars and need a safe place to put them even if we are not staying in them.”  
-currently unhoused community member

### Temporary Supported Communities with Tents:

A site that allows people to stay in tents and/or structures and has supportive services and resources like bathrooms and trash pick up. These sites can be managed by nonprofits or self-governed by residents, with dedicated community support.

- **Strengths:** easy set up (less construction costs), can provide supportive services, pet friendly, potential to have geographic flexibility across city
- **Concerns:** limited land availability, ongoing maintenance of area and supportive service costs, environmental concerns, community resistance (NIMBYism), keeps people outside exposed to the elements.

# CHOICES

## EXPLORATION OF ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

### **Low-barrier, Geographically Dispersed Shelters:**

Smaller shelters spread across the county where barriers to entry are reduced, pets are welcome, and couples and intergenerational families are allowed to stay together. These shelters would also ideally incorporate support services to help residents move into permanent housing.

- **Strengths:** can utilize existing infrastructure, helps people stay in their communities, lowers barriers that larger shelters have in place, increase accessibility across the city
- **Concerns:** push-back from community members (NIMBYism), an expensive model- multiple shelters require more staff and operational costs

“An effective emergency housing option would be a low-barrier, housing-focused shelter that prioritizes rapid re-housing and incorporates a wide array of supportive services.” -formerly unhoused community member

# VOICES

## FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

In order to center the voices and feedback of community members with lived experience of homelessness, working group members implemented a survey, “Understanding Barriers & Opportunities in Nashville’s Response to Homelessness.” The design and distribution method incorporated an inclusive and trauma-informed approach. See Appendix E for the survey and more findings.

One overarching theme that emerged is that people who are experiencing homelessness want permanent housing—not just transitional options. Respondents communicated an urgent need for rapid access to affordable housing, more resources, and effective support systems. The surveys were self supported and collected at various locations across Nashville. A total of 248 surveys were collected.

“People with lived experience aren’t just invited to the table—they help build it. Their insights are not ‘nice to have’; they’re essential for designing systems that actually work.” - formerly unhoused community member

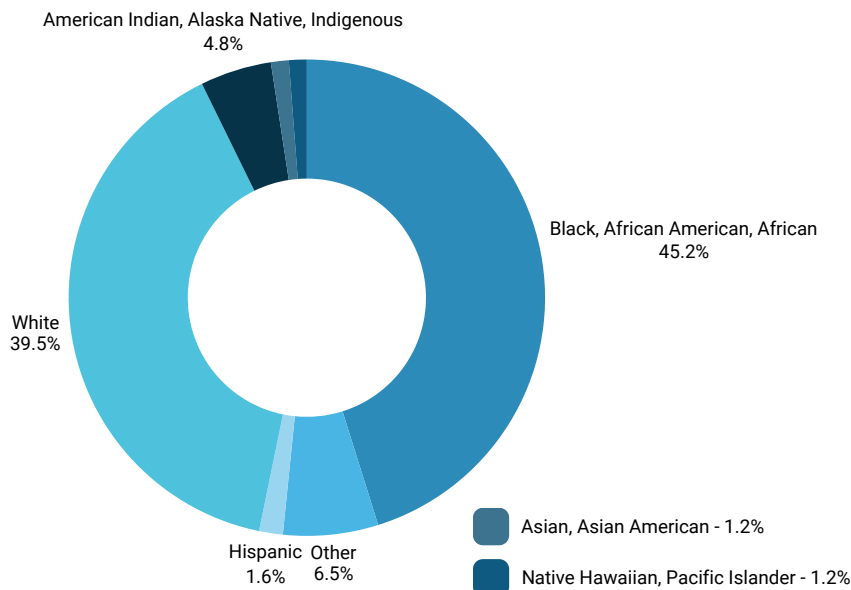
We need ways to get housed quickly without barriers across the entire city,” said one respondent. “Give us help in housing please,” said another. Other respondents made the point that housing is “essential for everyone” and “a basic human right.”



# VOICES

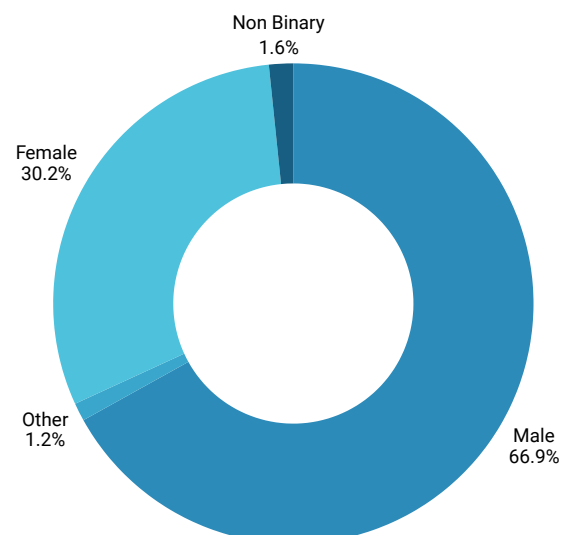
## FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

### Demographic Information of Survey Respondents



“Private rooms or rooms with less occupants than in the shelters now.”  
-current resident of an interim strategy option

“I just need my own space because of my mental health. Anywhere where I can choose whether or not to be around people and I can find peace by closing my door.”  
- currently unhoused community member

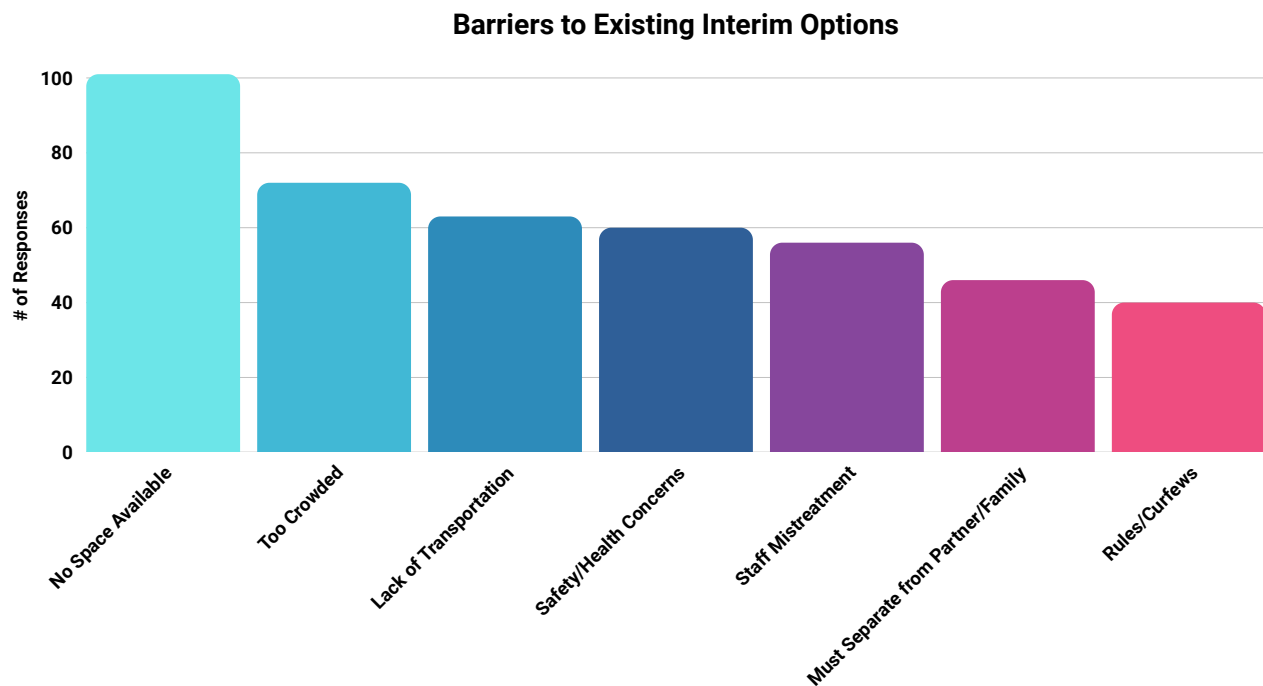


# VOICES

## FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

### Barriers to Existing Interim Options

When asked about the biggest barriers people face when trying to access shelters or transitional programs, the most common responses were “no space available” and “too crowded.” Other top responses included the lack of transportation, safety or health concerns, and staff mistreatment.



On the night of the Point In Time Count in January 2025, Nashville’s emergency shelters were only 70% full. Even on nights when the shelters are not at capacity, there are still real and perceived barriers to accessing them and perhaps speak to the need for smaller and more private settings.

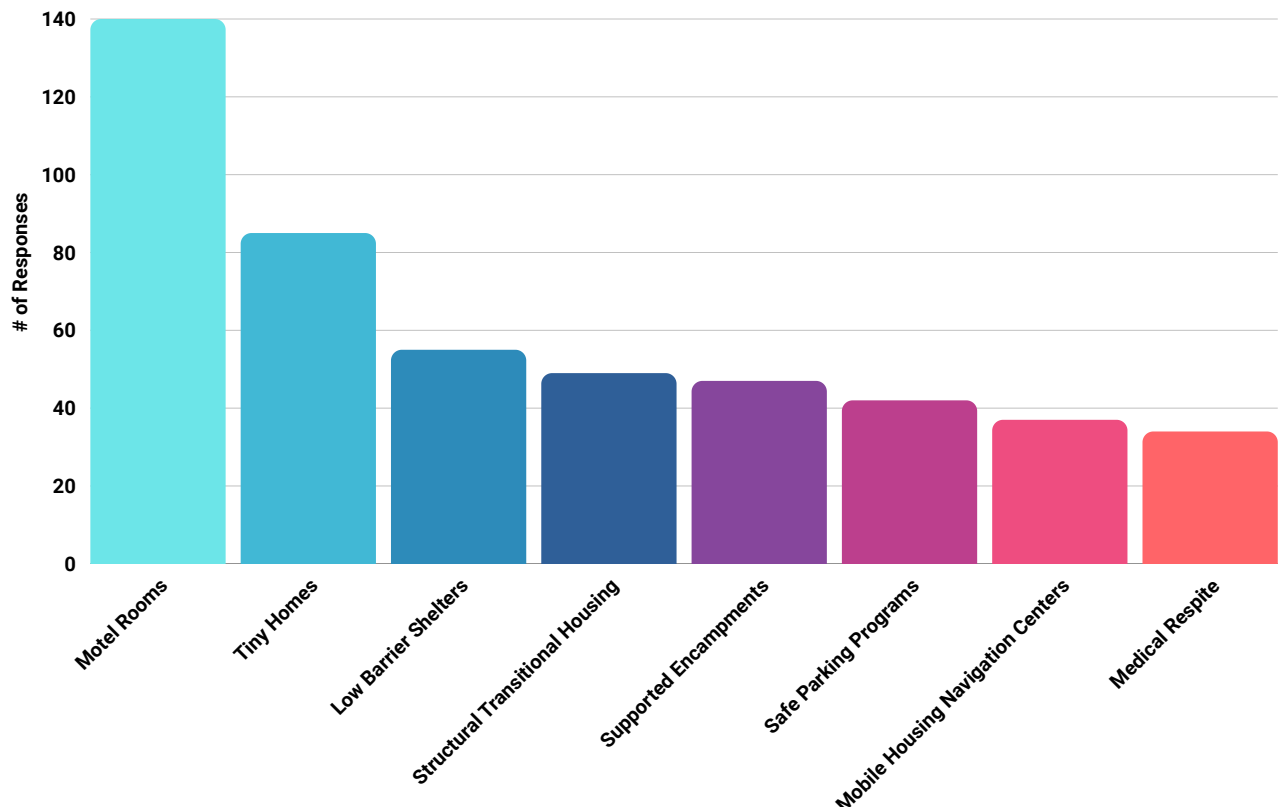
# VOICES

## FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

### Most Desired Interim Strategy

When asked what kind of emergency and transitional housing would help the most, the top response was, resoundingly, motel or hotel rooms converted into transitional housing. The next most popular response was transitional tiny home villages, followed by low barrier shelters that allow couples and pets.

Most Desired Interim Strategy



# VOICES

## FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

### Top Design Elements in Interim Strategies

Respondents were also asked, “If you could design your own emergency housing option, what would it look like?”

“It would be filled with lots of like minded people, people that care and assist. A clean, safe environment with all the things a person needs to transition.” -currently unhoused community member

### Recurring themes included:

- A safe, clean environment, and privacy
- Couples, families, and pets and their owners are allowed to stay together
- Affordability
- A strong interest in tiny home villages
- Mutual support among residents.
- Supportive services with kind and engaged staff
- Privacy and personal space
- Longer duration and stability

“Case workers should not make people feel like they are incarcerated.” - current resident of an interim strategy option

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep the inventory map of current interim strategies updated and available in addition to **celebrating the results of successful models to leverage funding** for their continued sustainability.
- Draft a one-pager that highlights the success and funding needs of interim strategies and distribute it to the members of metro council. **Advocate with members of metro council to gain their support in championing one interim option in their district.**
- **Convene members of the philanthropic community** and present this report to make a case for funding a new or additional interim option in Nashville.
- Mobilize current assets and create a dedicated group made up of key stakeholders to **create an additional tiny home community** in Nashville.
- Advocate for creative use of church land that **allows for tiny home mixed-income villages/communities at current interim strategy sites** that could also include safe parking options for people in vehicles.
- Convene necessary stakeholders to advocate for the creation of low barrier, geographically dispersed shelters.
- Request that the Standards of Care Committee **create a survey/feedback mechanism for providers of all Continuum of Care participating interim options** to glean feedback on what is going well and what could be improved.
- Utilize the Housing Opportunities Committee to help inventory real estate and development **opportunities for the expansion of additional hotel/motel conversions.**
- Facilitate opportunities for the broader community to engage on issues of housing and homelessness. **Provide education on root causes and evidence based solutions.** This could include infographics, one pagers, education sessions, and trainings.

# APPENDIX & RESOURCES

## Appendix A: Data on Homelessness in Nashville

### Unsheltered Homelessness in Nashville

The Point in Time Count provides a one night snapshot of people experiencing literal homelessness in Nashville and Davidson County. This count is federally mandated to be in the middle of the night in the last 10 days of January, partially in hope that most people will be in shelter. In the 2025 Point in Time Count, a total of 2,180 people were counted as experiencing homelessness. Of the people found, 602 (27%) were unsheltered that night.

- 43% were staying in encampments, 22% were on streets or sidewalks, and 13% were in vehicles
- 21% of people reported having pets staying with them
- 48% of people were experiencing chronic homelessness
- 41% of people reported having a serious mental illness
- 74% of people reported having any disabling condition
- 79% of people surveyed reported that their last permanent address was in Middle Tennessee

### Housing Inventory in Nashville

On the same night, Nashville-Davidson County conducted a Housing Inventory Count to capture a snapshot of programs dedicated to serving people experiencing and exiting homelessness. This snapshot helps to understand community capacity to shelter and house individuals experiencing homelessness. During the 2025 Housing Inventory Count, the following bed availability and utilization was reported:

#### Emergency Shelter

- Beds Available - 1780
- Beds Utilized - 1254 (70%)

#### Transitional Housing

- Beds Available - 492
- Beds Utilized - 323 (66%)

#### Rapid Re-Housing

- Beds Available - 602
- Beds Utilized - 602 (100%)

#### Permanent Supportive Housing

- Beds Available - 1340
- Beds Utilized - 1233 (92%)

#### Other Permanent Housing

- Beds Available - 918
- Beds Utilized - 875 (95%)

# APPENDIX & RESOURCES

## **HMIS Data**

The Nashville-Davidson County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). HMIS is a shared community database that collects data on households experiencing homelessness and programs intended to end homelessness. HMIS includes data from 47 participating service providers in Nashville; including emergency shelters, transitional housing, street outreach, supportive services, and permanent housing programs.

According to HMIS, 3,474 people experienced homelessness in Nashville in August 2025. These 3,474 people were in 2,582 households; 308 families (including 714 children) and 2,274 adult only households.

Over the past 12 months, 11,563 unique people have been recorded as experiencing homelessness in Nashville.

In August 2025, 1,298 people were served by the Nashville Rescue Mission, the city's largest shelter provider. As of November 2024, HMIS includes data from the Nashville Rescue Mission for the first time. While our system and community adjusts to this improvement in data collection, the data from these programs will be separated from regularly reported HMIS data. These numbers cannot be added to the above 3,474 to create an unduplicated total.

## **Appendix B: Guiding Principles**

- Keep our ultimate focus on efforts to expand permanent housing
- Promote safety, dignity, health, autonomy, and effectiveness as central values
- Consult with partners inclusively and strategically, directly involving and centering people with lived experience in every phase of the work
- Before implementing new strategies, take inventory of current resources and remove barriers
- Prioritize interim strategies that are flexible, low-barrier, and housing-focused
- Ensure any new strategies promote racial equity and are integrated with ongoing COC efforts and HMIS data

## **Appendix C: Nashville's Interim Options: Models, Inventory & Asset Mapping**

In order to view this spreadsheet, please visit [bit.ly/InterimOptionsNash](https://bit.ly/InterimOptionsNash).

# APPENDIX & RESOURCES

## Appendix D: Survey

“Understanding Barriers and Opportunities in Nashville’s Response to Homelessness”

### Understanding Barriers & Opportunities in Nashville's Response to Homelessness

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We are a group of service providers, advocates, and peer specialists. We want to hear directly from people who are currently unhoused or have lived experience of homelessness so that your voices can help us shape better emergency and transitional housing options in Nashville until permanent housing is available.

Everyone participating in this survey has valuable insights to offer that will help create recommendations for our city moving forward. You can skip any questions you'd like. Your survey is anonymous unless you choose to share your name. Thank you for participating!

1. First name (or nickname):

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2. What gender identity best describes you?

- ☐ Woman
  - ☐ Man
  - ☐ Non-binary
  - ☐ Transgender
  - ☐ Questioning
  - ☐ Culturally specific identity (“two spirit”)
  - ☐ Other (please describe):
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3. What is your race?

- ☐ American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous
  - ☐ Asian or Asian American
  - ☐ Black, African American, or African
  - ☐ Hispanic/Latina/e/o
  - ☐ Middle Eastern or North African
  - ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - ☐ White
  - ☐ Unsure
  - ☐ Other (please describe):
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4. What area of town do you usually sleep in (or did you sleep in before you were in housing)?

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5. What type of location did you sleep in last night?

- ☐ Streets or sidewalk
  - ☐ Vehicle, RV, or camper
  - ☐ Public park
  - ☐ Abandoned building
  - ☐ Bus or Greyhound station
  - ☐ Under bridge or overpass
  - ☐ Outdoor encampment or woods
  - ☐ Emergency shelter (like the Mission)
  - ☐ Transitional housing program
  - ☐ Motel or hotel (paid for by agency)
  - ☐ Motel or hotel that you paid for
  - ☐ Jail, hospital, or treatment program
  - ☐ House or apartment where you were couch surfing
  - ☐ House or apartment where you live
  - ☐ Other (please describe):
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(See back)



# APPENDIX & RESOURCES

**6. What are the biggest barriers you or your friends face when trying to access shelters or transitional programs? (Check all that apply)**

- ☐ No space available
- ☐ Must be sober
- ☐ Must separate from partner or family
- ☐ No pets allowed
- ☐ Safety or health concerns
- ☐ Too crowded
- ☐ Staff mistreatment
- ☐ Lack of transportation
- ☐ Documentation or ID requirements
- ☐ Rules or curfews
- ☐ Lack of disability or accessibility accommodations
- ☐ Gender identity
- ☐ Background issues (like being on the sex offender registry)
- ☐ Banned
- ☐ Other (please describe):

**7. What kind of emergency and transitional housing would help the most in Nashville? (Please check your top 3.)**

- ☐ Motel or hotel rooms converted into transitional housing
- ☐ Structured transitional programs (like Salvation Army)
- ☐ Mobile Housing Navigation Centers through Community Care Fellowship
- ☐ Low barrier shelters where pets and couples are allowed
- ☐ Safe parking programs for people in cars, campers, and RVs
- ☐ Transitional tiny home villages
- ☐ Medical respite care programs for people coming out of the hospital
- ☐ Supported encampments with tents or structures (pets allowed)
- ☐ Sober living or recovery homes
- ☐ Domestic violence programs
- ☐ Other (please describe):

**8. If you could design your own emergency housing option, what would it look like? (Emergency housing options are supportive, short-term places people can stay until they obtain permanent housing.)**

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**9. What do you want decision makers to understand about homelessness that they often get wrong?**

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**10. Is there anything else you want us to know about how service providers and advocates can better support people without housing in Nashville?**

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**Thank you again for your time and input!**

(Online survey: [bit.ly/NashvilleHomelessness](https://bit.ly/NashvilleHomelessness))

# APPENDIX & RESOURCES

## Appendix E: Additional Survey Results

When asked, “What type of location did you sleep in last night?”, 26.2% of participants reported sleeping on the streets or sidewalk, 12.5% in a house or apartment, 10.5% in an emergency shelter, 9.3% in an outdoor encampment or the woods, 8.5% in a public park, and a handful of other locations.

## Recurring Themes and Additional Takeaways

- **What are misunderstandings held by decision makers?**
  - Homelessness is often not a choice; it’s a result of systemic failures, health issues, or trauma
  - People who are unhoused deserve respect and to have their humanity recognized and affirmed
  - Judgment, stigma, and stereotypes about homelessness are still widespread, especially when it comes to substance use disorder
  - Government policy and social systems significantly contribute to challenges
- **How service providers can better support people?**
  - Rapid housing and support services
  - Provide dignified resources about food, showers, storage, and trauma-informed spaces to support dignity
  - Better understand mental health and accommodate challenges
  - Be transparent, honest, understanding and respectful; keep your promises or better yet, don’t make promises you can’t keep

## Appendix F: National Reports

**“Temporary Supported Communities: Strategies for Serving Unsheltered People”** by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council (July 2024)

<https://nhchc.org/resource/temporary-supported-communities-strategies-for-serving-unsheltered-people/>

This group used a 2024 report from the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) called **“Interim Strategies for Responding to Unsheltered Homelessness”** for inspiration and direction.

[https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Interim-Strategies-for-Responding-to-Unsheltered-Homelessness\\_12.17.24.pdf](https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Interim-Strategies-for-Responding-to-Unsheltered-Homelessness_12.17.24.pdf)