

**LOVELAND BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE**

WHERE QUALITY OF LIFE AND PUBLIC POLICY INTERSECT



# Loveland's Response to Homelessness

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Policy White Paper

**October 2023**

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# Introduction

Like communities across the nation, the city of Loveland has been grappling with how best to address issues around people experiencing homelessness. In 2022, the number of encampments, particularly along the river and around the downtown area, led citizens to demand that the City create a plan to restore order and address growing encampment issues. In response, Loveland City Council enacted an emergency ordinance to ban unauthorized encampments. In order to implement and enforce the camping ban, an alternative overnight shelter was needed. City Council directed its staff to begin work to create a city-operated facility for people experiencing homelessness to stay overnight. But that only addressed a single angle of a complex problem, and the challenges didn't end there.

In this white paper, Loveland Business Roundtable will examine the status of Loveland's encampment ban and overall homelessness response. Just as there is no single reason for homelessness, there is no single solution to the problem. **What are the City, the police department, civic partners, and the nonprofit community doing to minimize the negative impacts of homelessness in Loveland?**

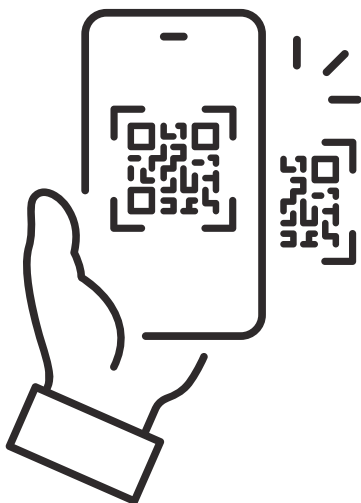


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# Key definitions

## HMIS (Homeless Management Information System):

A local information technology system used to collect client-level data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. In the Northern Colorado Continuum of Care, Homeward Alliance serves as the HMIS Lead Agency, taking on the responsibility of managing our local HMIS. (1) Historically, Loveland has not participated in collecting data with HMIS. Homeward Alliance, as part of the lead agency on homelessness, was tasked with integrating Loveland agencies, including the recently formed Loveland Resource Center into HMIS to have a better understanding on homelessness in Loveland. House of Neighborly Service, Salvation Army and Community Kitchen are all scheduled to begin using HMIS by the end of 2023. (<https://www.lovgov.org/community/addressing-homelessness/frequently-asked-questions-faqs>) This will allow a more complete understanding of how many people are accessing services - and of the frequency with which services are used.



# Key definitions

## Northern Colorado Continuum of Care:

A regional planning body that includes the City of Loveland, City of Fort Collins, City of Greeley, Larimer County, and Weld County, coordinating housing and services, designed to promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness and to provide funding for efforts to rehouse homeless individuals and families and to promote access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs to optimize self-sufficiency among those experiencing homelessness. The NoCo Continuum of Care consists of work that includes the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Coordinated Assessment Housing Placement System (CAHPS) and CoC administration is funded through federal and state grants, foundations, CoC Lead Agency (United Way of Weld County), HMIS Lead Agency (Homeward Alliance), City Human Service Grants and member contributions.

### How is the NoCo CoC funded?

The work of the Northern Colorado Continuum of Care, including the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Coordinated Assessment Housing Placement System (CAHPS), and CoC administration are funded through a mix of federal and state grants, philanthropic foundations, the lead agencies for Continuum of Care and HMIS, city human service grants, and Continuum of Care member contributions. (2)

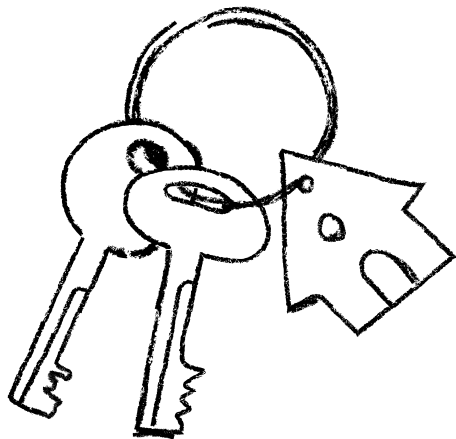
# Key definitions

## Permanent supportive housing:

An innovative program that combines affordable housing with supportive services to help people lead more stable lives. Permanent supportive housing targets people who are homeless, have one or more disabilities, experience multiple barriers to housing, and need supportive services. Saint Valentine Apartments, slated for opening in late 2023, is Loveland's first PSH project. (3)

## Transitional housing:

Temporary housing with supportive services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness with the goal of interim stability and support to successfully move to and maintain permanent housing. (4) Shelters are generally considered transitional housing.



# Key Loveland Policy Decisions

## 2020 - Inclement Weather Policy

When local agencies ceased operations of an inclement weather overnight shelter, a Council Rule of Four item directed staff to consider an inclement weather policy for the homeless. As a result, the City created an emergency winter shelter policy in January 2020. The City began operation of shelter during inclement weather at the former 137 Homeless Connection location.

## 2022 - Unauthorized Encampment Ban

In May 2022, in response to citizen outcry over the number of encampments in public areas, Loveland City Council passed an emergency ordinance enacting a camping ban. The ban could not be enacted, however, without an overnight shelter. The *City of Boise v. Martin* case from the 9th Circuit was a landmark decision that held it is cruel and unusual punishment to criminalize the act of sleeping outside when an individual has no other place to go.

## 2023 - Ordinance “Tightening”

In August 2023, Loveland City Council approved two ordinances designed to address disorder and uncleanliness in public areas, particularly downtown. The public urination ordinance was expanded to include human excrement, vomit, spittle, and other bodily waste; another ordinance reduced the amount of time before LPD officers can confiscate abandoned property or abate illegal encampments from 72 hours after notification to two hours. Both of these ordinances were the result of an effort to tighten rules around undesirable behaviors related to homelessness, without infringing on civil liberties or free speech.

# The Emergence of Homelessness as a Key Issue in Loveland

In **2018**, City Council requested for a citywide strategic plan from city staff, who commissioned a study through the Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness. This effort formally initiated the City's work on creating and implementing a Homeless Strategic Plan. The first recommendation from the Burnes study was to work with a lead agency to provide technical support. The City selected Homeward Alliance for this work in **October 2021**.

City staff began its encampment cleanup program in **2019**. In **January 2020**, the City adopted an inclement weather overnight shelter policy. (4)

A permanent supportive housing project was approved in **October 2020**. St. Valentine Apartments is a 54-unit supportive housing project currently being built northeast of the Police and Courts Building on Hayes Avenue. It will help those transitioning out of homelessness. Tenants will pay up to 30% of their income or at least \$25 per month – as well as being offered case management. St. Valentine Apartments is scheduled to open in **November 2023**. (5)

In **October 2021**, City Council approved a nightly shelter to run annually from November to March. Council started actively engaging in the encampment conversation specifically in **March/April 2022** before authorizing an emergency ordinance to create an unauthorized encampment ban. The emergency ordinance led to the funding and construction of the South Railroad Facility, the city's overnight shelter.

The City began operating the Loveland Resource Center and the South Railroad Facility Overnight Shelter in **2022**. In **2023**, recognizing the limitations of the current facilities and procedures, city staff began working with the Loveland Homelessness Task Force to determine a comprehensive plan for the future. (6)

# Current Services Provided in Loveland by Need

<b>Service Area</b>				
Food (pantry)	Food Bank	House of Neighborly Service	Salvation Army	
Food (prepared)	Community Kitchen	Front Porch		
Employment Resources	Homeward Alliance	Loveland Workforce Center	People Ready	LaborMax Staffing
Day Center	City of Loveland (Individuals)	Family Promise of Larimer County (families)	Alternatives to Violence (domestic violence victims)	
Overnight Shelter	City of Loveland	Family Promise of Larimer County (families)	Alternatives to Violence (domestic violence victims)	Salvation Army (emergency/respice motel vouchers)
Disability	Disabled Resource Services			
Clothing	House of Neighborly Service/Guiding Connections	Salvation Army		
Hygiene	House of Neighborly Service/Guiding Connections	Salvation Army		
Showers	Loveland Resource Center	Family Promise of Larimer County (families)		
Laundry	Loveland Resource Center	Mobile Laundry		
Medical	Sunrise Community Health	Sunrise Mobile Unit (Life Center)	Saint Matthew's Medical Clinic	Colorado Health Network
Behavioral	Northern Colorado Health Alliance	Colorado Health Network		
Mental Health	SummitStone			
Street Outreach				
Safe Parking	House of Neighborly Service			
Assistance with Documents and Public Health Benefits	Homeward Alliance	Disabled Resource Services	House of Neighborly Service	
Rental Assistance/Eviction Prevention	Neighbor 2 Neighbor	House of Neighborly Service		
Housing	Loveland Housing Authority	Alternatives to Violence (domestic violence victims)	Saint Valentine Apartments (Catholic Charities/SummitStone/Homeward Alliance)	



# What's Next?

**St. Valentine Apartments** is on track to open in November 2023.

The **Loveland Homelessness Task Force**, convened in July 2023 by Homeward Alliance to assemble a focused group of individuals with expertise or authority regarding homelessness solutions, has begun to identify strategic goals that can be turned into action steps. The task force works to achieve collaborative, sustainable solutions using best practices to address the needs of those experiencing homelessness and the community as a whole.

Representation on the task force consists of the following: The City of Loveland (including the community partnership office, facilities, communications, legal, police, and the city manager's office), nonprofits, emergency services, downtown organizations and businesses, the faith community, philanthropic leaders, and other community members. (7)

The City of Loveland has generated an RFP (Request for Proposals) for a provider of **street outreach services** to be released by the end of the year. This will be an on-the-ground team of resource navigators and care coordinators trained to work with persons experiencing homelessness and to steer them toward the resources they need.

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) plans to start a **Downtown Ambassador team** to maintain safety and cleanliness in the downtown area, and to address issues around homelessness in expedient, informed ways.



# What's Next? (cont'd)

The **Northern Colorado Regional Youth Shelter** is a collaboration among Thompson and Poudre School Districts, Thompson Education Foundation, Larimer County, several local nonprofits, and The Matthews House, which will run the facility. This will be an overnight shelter and daytime drop-in center for people ages 15-20 at 814 E 16th St. - the former site of Thompson School District's Monroe Early Childhood Center. The shelter will have capacity to serve approximately 25 individuals on an overnight basis, as well as 15-20 people for drop-in support. Project opening is scheduled for late 2024. (8)

Last month, Larimer County opened its long-awaited behavioral health facility, the **Longview Behavioral Health Campus**. Situated on the northwest corner of Taft Hill Road and W. Trilby Road, the 40-acre campus will house a variety of behavioral health services. The first of those services, Acute Care, will address a critical gap in available crisis services within the County. SummitStone Health Partners is providing a phased approach to the opening of the Acute Care facility at Longview. They will offer 24/7 behavioral health urgent care, care coordination, substance use treatment with medications, withdrawal management, a crisis stabilization unit (CSU), and on-site pharmacy and lab. Future phases of Acute Care will be based on community needs. The facility will serve all Larimer County community members, regardless of their ability to pay (9).

A strategic area identified by the Loveland Homelessness Task Force is the need for a **Housing Navigation and Transition Center**, which would centralize food, day/overnight shelter and access to resources - removing the necessity for people experiencing homelessness to visit multiple locations for basic needs.

Another strategic area is **Community Outreach and Education**, to educate Loveland residents and business owners about the ongoing coordinated effort to respond effectively to local issues around homelessness.

# Conclusion

Homelessness in our community is certainly a complex issue that will never be completely resolved.

Just as there are multiple types of homelessness, there are a variety of entities and services that must work together in a coordinated fashion in order to make meaningful, structural progress. The greater implementation of HMIS for tracking of services, new facilities including St. Valentine Apartments and the Longview Mental Health campus, and the coordinated efforts of the Loveland Homelessness Task Force are just a few ways that we see visible progress, both for people experiencing homelessness and for the Loveland community at large.

Loveland Business Roundtable encourages the community to recognize that transformative change can take years, but strategic work being done right now will impact our city's homeless response in the next several months. Community partnerships are essential to building awareness of what's being done to address homelessness in downtown Loveland and throughout the region.



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