

The need by the numbers:

* On average, 1342 school-aged children experienced Homelessness per school year from 2014 – 2015 through 2016 – 2017

* 506 households representing 702 persons were identified during the regular homeless “point-in-time” count mandated by the Federal Government in January, 2020 in Kalamazoo County, and

* A recent County study identified a large county-wide gap between the need for affordable housing units and the number of units to meet that need.

Every school district in Kalamazoo County had children who were homeless during the school years and Cities and many Townships identified residents who moved to shelters, lived in a car, camped in a non-designated camping site or resided in a place not meant for human habitation.

In response to this unacceptable situation for school age children and their families as well as those who do not have permanent, safe and affordable housing, the Kalamazoo County Public Housing Commission is proposing the renewal and expansion of the County-wide, rapid re-housing and support service initiative and the creation of a fund to invest in the development of decent affordable housing.

- **Who will this help?**

Families with children and single adults’ through-out Kalamazoo County

- **What will it do?**

Provide temporary financial housing assistance and support services that lay the ground work for ongoing housing stability as well as invest in the construction of quality affordable housing.

- **Where will it work?**

In partnership with every school, school district, City, Village and township in Kalamazoo County.

- **When will it start?**

In 2022 with the passage of a County-wide .75 housing millage on November 3, 2020

- **How will it work?**

Through contracts with County Public entities, non-profit organizations selected through a RFP process and a variety of private and non-profit housing developers under the oversight of the Kalamazoo County Commission.

Here are some specific details:

Serving at least 200 Families annually with rapid rehousing and rent subsidies.

1. The referral process for qualifying families and will be through the existing infrastructure of Homeless liaisons present in every school district and social service providers.
2. Families and Individuals to be served will have an income that does not exceed 60% of the area median income (AMI). The 2020 Kalamazoo County 60% AMI for a family of four is \$47,400. The goal will be to serve those with incomes at and below the 60% AMI limit.
3. Participants will be expected to contribute a percentage of their own income toward rent, in most cases, 30%of their monthly gross income.

4. Each family and individuals will participate with a support specialist to create a housing self-sufficiency plan that will be monitored, time-sensitive and adaptable.
5. Family self-sufficiency planning will include a focus on income, budgeting, long-range goal setting and connections to other appropriate mainstream resources.
6. The average length of assistance will not exceed one year for the rapid rehousing and transitional housing program and as long as income qualified in permanent housing.
7. As much as possible, families will be assisted to stay in the school district where their children attend school.

Partnering with housing developers in the creation of up to 900 units of permanent affordable housing in Kalamazoo County over the course of the eight year millage.

1. Establish a comprehensive process to provide financing, project gap filling and leveraging to incentivize private and non-profit affordable housing developers to create new equitable housing opportunities.

The Millage

1. It is calculated that a County wide .75 millage would raise approximately \$6.2 million annually.
2. The cost to a homeowner with a house that has a market value of \$100,000 would be \$37.50 a year.
3. The proportional geographic distribution of assistance and investment will be insured through contract.
4. The length of the millage request is for eight years.

Oversight, management and infrastructure

1. The Kalamazoo County Commission, through its public partners, the Kalamazoo County Public Housing Commission and the Kalamazoo County Land Bank will work together to establish housing goals, establish annual work plans, engage a professional management staff, contract with local non-profit entities as necessary and define and manage the processes and procedures for rapidly rehousing individuals and families and incentivizing the creation of permanently affordable housing.
2. The provision of direct services for family qualification, rental assistance and ongoing housing supports will be established.
3. Outcome measures will be built in to the contracts for service and development activities and regularly reported to the Kalamazoo County Commission.
4. This initiative will always seek to collaborate and cooperate with existing housing assistance activities, never replacing programs, but flexibly leveraging and augmenting resources to increase the opportunity for further system-wide, positive housing outcomes.
5. County landlords and developers will be important partners in this endeavor. Landlords who agree to accept tenants through this program and developers who create new affordable housing will agree to keep their rents consistent with local affordability standards.

Rationale

Homelessness and the lack of sufficient safe, decent affordable housing is a growing issue of national concern and it is no different here in Kalamazoo County. Federal and State resources have been woefully insufficient in addressing this need. With our local focus on, and commitment to, education as a key component to both our County-wide quality of life as well as our opportunities for economic success, it is critical that we support families with school age children. No current Federal or State program provides resources that are specifically targeted to serving this population.

Additionally, our ongoing battle with COVID-19 and the need to “shelter at home”, the growing recognition of the disparate impact of housing and other policies on minority citizens, the price of housing that is out of reach for lower income working people and the increasing proportional increase of our senior population all contribute to the profound need for public incentives to create housing options that may be impossible to provide with a pure private model. We have an opportunity to create a local program that is flexible enough to address local needs and adaptable enough to always seek the best pathways for positive housing stability and at the same time serve as model for how a community commits to each other.

This proposal is respectfully submitted by the members of the Kalamazoo County Public Housing Commission and all the individuals and non-profit partners that participated in its formation.