VOCAL KENTUCKY

Coming in From the Cold:
A Winter Safety and Housing Connection Pilot Plan

Plan calls for housing and care for unhoused Louisvillians, and offers an opportunity to turn crisis into long-term stability

As the city of Louisville prepares for winter and freezing temperatures it must act to ensure those living on the streets are safe. The city must use this crisis moment to create long-term stability by connecting people to permanent housing and healthcare.

Our Winter Safety and Housing Connection Pilot Plan was developed by people who are, or have lived on the streets in Louisville. It calls for a pilot program that shifts away from ticketing, arresting and relocating people who cannot afford a place to live, to providing rapid housing and healthcare, and using that to create long-term stability. We urge the city to increase its current investment into its homeless winter response, truly invest in this proposed plan, and evaluate its success.

Mayor Greenberg and Louisville Metro Government must:

- **Suspend the ticketing and arresting of unhoused people:** Suspend routine unlawful camping and homelessness-related criminal trespass citations, arrests, encampment removals, and disposal of personal belongings throughout the pilot, with narrowly defined exceptions for immediate safety threats and legal requirements.

- **Provide housing during freezing temperatures:** Louisville must provide people stays in hotels for the entire period of freezing temperatures. Currently the city offers only 30 day stays. Unhoused Louisvillians must be allowed to move in as couples, and with support animals, and allow for storage. If this is truly impossible, allow people to "bank" some portion of their 30 days. This would allow people to temporarily return to the streets if temperatures rise, allowing them to return to hotels when temperatures drop again.

- **Set up accessible 24/7 warming and stabilization spaces:** Provide low-barrier, around-the-clock facilities that accommodate partners, pets, and belongings, with secure storage, bathrooms, food, transportation, and connections to healthcare and housing. These warming and stabilization facilities are crucial even for those who are provided temporary housing inside city hotels.

- **Provide healthcare:** Many people on the street are without sufficient healthcare, including mental health and substance use care. Healthcare must be provided to people placed in hotels, and provided at warming and stabilization spaces to meet immediate needs, and promote long-term stability.

- **Provide caseworkers:** Assign caseworkers to work with people to gain permanent housing during these difficult times, and to address any crucial needs like accessing basic benefits or getting identification that many people on our streets struggle with.

- **Community-led outreach**: Invest in community partners to lead voluntary street outreach, and coordinate directly with the Homeless Engagement and Assessment Teams (HEART) to coordinate services and referrals. TheLMPD can provide emergency safety response, but should not be the face of the outreach to unhoused Louisvillians. People should be able to access shelter, transportation, healthcare, and housing assistance without first being cited, arrested, or forced into the criminal legal system.

- **Accountability and long-term goals:** Metro Government should publicly report on the implementation of this pilot, and its successes. The city should report on caseworker and healthcare provider ratios, as well as the frequency of engagements and visits to those temporarily housed. The city should also report on the number of people actually placed into housing, not just given a voucher or a supportive housing referral, as well as other basic indicators, like how many people got identification and access to government benefits they are eligible for. The pilot should test whether reducing routine enforcement while increasing accessible, voluntary services improves public safety and housing outcomes. The goal is not simply to move people off sidewalks. The goal is to give people real alternatives to living on sidewalks—and a pathway to stable housing without requiring criminal legal system involvement.

A Climate Call to Action for the Unhoused

Climate change is extremely dangerous for the unhoused. It is causing extreme storms, brutal winters and unbearable summers. While the Louisville Metro Government has a limited role in how it can address this global crisis, there are steps the city can take to mitigate the harms of climate change, and to make our city more resilient. Many of these steps can improve our city overall, like greening our city and reducing heat domes. Many could even address the affordability crisis, like reducing the cost of utilities by investing in renewable energy.

VOCAL-KY stands ready to fight for a green, resilient Louisville and Kentucky. That begins with banning the creation of data centers that will drive up energy costs and fuel climate change, all while receiving tax breaks better spent on Louisvillians.