

# Denver Launches New Effort to Address Housing Affordability Challenges

**DENVER** – Mayor Michael B. Hancock and Erik Soliván, Executive Director of the Mayor’s Office of Housing & Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE), today launched a new strategy aimed at helping Denver residents experiencing homelessness or struggling to make ends meet.

The city’s strategy will go beyond a housing-first approach, and focus efforts on connecting individuals and families to affordable housing, healthy living and good paying jobs. The new approach for Denver will integrate all three factors to empower people to lead vibrant lives no matter their station in life.

“We want our residents to have the opportunity to turn a house into a home, and truly thrive in our city,” Mayor Hancock said. “To give people the chance to build a home, build their lives and build their futures, we must go beyond putting a roof over someone’s head. This is a new approach to leveraging our resources and coordinating department work to connect our people with good jobs, good health and a good home. When these three needs are met, people are empowered to succeed.”

Mayor Hancock and Soliván detailed the strategy and supporting action plan at the city’s third annual Housing Summit. The Office of HOPE will lead the work of leveraging public and private partner programs and resources to provide:

- Jobs through **workforce training** that will help families and people grow their wages and begin to save for their future;
- **Health services**, including mental health, addiction and supportive services, to help people rise to the opportunities ahead of them; and
- **Housing** that is affordable across income categories to ensure families and individuals take root in Denver.

Denver is experiencing a historic low for inventory and high cost of homeownership with median sale prices exceeding \$350,000. And according to the Denver Housing Authority, a minimum of 21,000 affordable units are needed to meet the current housing demand. This need impacts everyone from those in our shelters to workers on construction sites, teachers, firefighters, police officers and the service industry.

The population of those who are homeless has also changed in recent years:

- Nearly three out of four homeless individuals surveyed in Denver are receiving income from work;
- A growing number, about one in five, are homeless seniors, including an increasing number of senior women;
- The chronically homeless make up about one in five people experiencing homelessness, and a significant amount experience mental health and substance abuse issues; and
- Young adults are beginning to make up almost 10 percent of the shelter population.

Under the three priority areas of affordable housing, healthy living and good paying jobs, the Office of HOPE, working across agencies, compiled a list of 30 short-term actions to improve and expand city and partner services throughout the end of the year. Short-term actions include:

### **Housing**

- Develop policy and financing for Accessory Dwelling Units in partnership with the Denver Housing Authority.
- Develop code compliance checklist for Live/Work Spaces and look to establish a navigator in Permitting/Zoning to answer resident questions.
- Expand pipeline of permanent supportive housing projects by evaluating and developing a Supportive Services Funding Program, which will include a TANF and/or Medicaid underwriting criteria for the pipeline.
- Improve and expand Renter Eviction Assistance Program to prevent more people from losing housing or to help them access new housing opportunities when facing eviction.

### **Health and Supportive Services**

- Expand number of co-responders from 6 to 24, pair them with a wider array of emergency service providers and develop specialized areas of expertise for youth, those with opioid addiction and other focused areas of need.
- Develop and administer pilot peer-to-peer mental health, engagement, counseling and support program.
- Expand storage options and develop sidewalk storage pilot program for individuals seeking shelter services.
- Develop and pilot shelter diversion program.

### **Workforce**

- Evaluate, expand and integrate Denver Day Works Program with workforce actions.
- Expand the Section 3 Jobs Programs, which provide economic opportunities for low- and very low-income individuals, and integrate it with the Denver Housing Authority.

For the full list of short-term action items go to: [www.DenverGov.org/HOPE](http://www.DenverGov.org/HOPE).

“The strategy and actions reflect the feedback of our partners, communities and city agencies,” Soliván said. “We are grateful for their hard work and ongoing support, and know that by working together, we can do more to build a safer, healthier and stronger Denver.”

This new strategy will also work with the Mayor’s mobility efforts to ensure the city is providing more and better transportation options for families and individuals where limited options may be impacting their ability to find affordable housing and good jobs.

Today, the City and County of Denver invests more in affordable housing and homelessness than ever before. The new strategy builds and expands on the considerable work by the city and partners in the areas of affordable housing, job training and health services over the last six years.

For a list of that work go to [www.DenverGov.org/HOPE](http://www.DenverGov.org/HOPE).

## Housing

- Passed the first-ever dedicated fund of \$150 million over the next 10 years to create or preserve 6,000 affordable homes.
- By the end of the year, the city will have completed the goal of building, preserving or rehabilitating 3,000 affordable units over five years, a year ahead of schedule.
- Passed a local construction defects reform ordinance to spur condo construction and advocated for statewide action.
- Supported nearly 1,300 households with down payment assistance through the launch of the Metro Mortgage Assistance Plus Program in 2013.
- Housing nearly 250 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in permanent supportive housing by the end of 2017.
- Connected nearly 1,500 people to permanent supportive and more stable, long-term housing since the beginning of 2016, which includes but is not limited to:
  - Nearly 800 housed in the Denver area through the Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement System.
  - 279 housed through the outreach work of the Denver Street Outreach Collaborative.
- Began building two additional shelters that are set to open in 2017 through partnerships with community providers.

## Health and supportive services

- Launched the new co-responder program, which pairs mental health professionals with police officers on patrol. Teams have assisted more than 1,300 people and connected 100 percent of them health services, with only 4 percent of contacts resulting in a citation or arrest.
- Expanded street outreach workers to a 24 hour a day, seven day a week operation to assist homeless individuals at all times of the day.
- Created Denver Outreach Court, which brings the courtroom to homeless individuals in a safe and familiar location while reducing the amount of time required to resolve warrants and tickets. In just eleven sessions, the court has heard more than 550 cases involving 190 people. 100 percent have successfully completed their cases.

## Workforce

- Launched Denver Day Works, which connects people who are homeless directly to professional work experience. More than 4,200 hours of work and more than \$50,000 in wages have been paid to the 109 participants involved in the program.
- Increased access to workforce services through additional locations and new dedicated staff; now annually serving nearly 31,000 adults with job searches, more than 2,800 employers with talent recruitment, and more than 800 youth with job training and employment.
- Significantly expanded its employment and training programs for disadvantaged youth through the launch of new internship programs for at-risk youth and Denver Scholarship Foundation scholars, including entrepreneurship and software coding boot-camp training programs, as well as implementation of the My Brother's Keeper Summer of Success program for young men of color.

###

*About the Office of HOPE*

Created in January by Mayor Michael Hancock, the Office of HOPE harnesses city resources, talent and determination to identify those experiencing homelessness, get them into housing and other opportunities, and keep them moving forward. The office also works on broader housing affordability strategies to create permanent housing and supportive services for at-risk residents, low- and moderate-income workforce rental housing, and moderate-income for-sale housing while integrating programs and services to build stronger neighborhoods.