



Safety and dignity for all Denverites is at the core of the Promise of Denver. **Living on the streets is neither safe nor dignified – for the people experiencing homelessness or the broader community.** Unfortunately, in recent years, this is a problem that has grown significantly and spread across all parts of Denver and our region.

Our unhoused neighbors each bring a unique set of circumstances that have led to their position: some people are experiencing a financial and / or health crisis that has cost them their housing, while others are fleeing a violent or traumatic situation; some people are traveling through and others are long-time Denverites; some people just need housing assistance and others require a more comprehensive support plan. **We need to recognize that there is not a single, monolithic homeless population and so we need a coordinated set of nuanced, population-specific approaches.**

Denver voters have been generous in funding dedicated sales taxes to address both homelessness (2020) and behavioral health (2018), including behavioral health services for people experiencing homelessness. Additionally, Denver and local governments in the region have benefitted from tens of millions of dollars of federal COVID recovery money to address homelessness and housing. But the federal support is coming to an end and Denver and other local governments will be facing a funding cliff that the next Mayor will need to address, in partnership with other local leaders. Recognizing that this is city-wide and regional challenge, we must accept that all neighborhoods within Denver and all cities and counties within the metro area have important roles to play in advancing solutions. I will dedicate the time and leadership necessary to build the political will across Denver and harness the resources of the region to solve this challenge.

Having observed then-Mayor Hickenlooper's efforts on Denver's Road Home initiative, I know first-hand that homelessness is not a new challenge for Denver. And it is not one Denver faces alone – cities large and small, in all parts of Colorado and the country have been vexed by it. Over my career, I have seen and learned a lot about what works and what doesn't.

I will eliminate unsanctioned encampments within my first year in office. I'll do so by maximizing the use of shelter and housing currently available, and temporarily moving people into sanctioned camping sites until we have built sufficient sheltering and housing capacity. This action will improve the safety and health for all Denver residents immediately.

MY EXPERIENCE

- As Chief of Staff helped leverage almost **\$70M in new funding to address homelessness** in partnership with Mile High United Way
- I have traveled to cities around the country to study **best practices** and learn from others
- As CEO of the Chamber, I convened conversations with more than 28 service providers, business leaders and local government officials to **identify specific actions and build partnerships** across the public, private and non-profit sectors
- Volunteered with the **Denver Rescue Mission**



FRAMING FACTS



The Metro-Denver Homeless Initiative's annual Point-In-Time (PIT) count for 2022 (conducted January 2022) counted **6,888 people experiencing homelessness** in the seven-county metro area, up from 6,104 counted in 2020.¹ Of those, 69% were in Denver.



Of the 6,888 counted in January 2022, **2,073 were unsheltered** persons.²



While Denver is home to 13% of the state general population, we have **45% of shelter beds** in the state. 35% of people in our shelters are not from Denver.³



There is a substantial over-representation of minority populations among the unhoused in the Denver-metro area. For example, Black / African American people are just 5.6% of the general population, but were **more than 23%** of the point-in-time count.⁴



In the 2020-21 school year, Denver Public Schools served **1,574 students** through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program.⁵



National research has shown that **more than half** of sheltered adults under age 65 experiencing homelessness are working.⁶ Local service providers offer similar estimates for the unhoused population in Denver.



The estimated 2023 spending per person experiencing homelessness or in Permanent Supportive Housing (according to a range of daily count estimates) in Denver is expected to be **between \$37,309 and \$73,450**.⁷



Overdose was the most common cause of death among people experiencing homelessness in Denver, accounting for **46% of deaths** among the homeless population.⁸



Denver's 2023 budget includes **\$254,000,000** to address homelessness.⁹



MY GUIDING VALUES



Compassion & Optimism

When we talk about homelessness as an issue to be addressed, it can be easy to forget that we're talking about the lives of individuals: **veterans** who have served our country, **mothers and children** seeking safety from abuse, **sons and brothers** struggling with addiction and mental illness, **seniors** who have inadequate savings to meet the rapidly growing cost of living in Denver. As Mayor, I will never lose sight of the fact that our policy choices have very real and meaningful consequences for our unhoused neighbors and the people who know and love them. Further, I believe strongly in the resiliency of the human spirit, as I have witnessed it in my family and lived it myself. I will never give up on the belief that people can bounce back from dire situations to reclaim their dignity and rebuild their lives.



Collaboration

Solving homelessness will require the engagement and help of five key partner groups.

- **Local governments** – cities and counties – need to step up. Denver cannot and will not continue to shoulder the burden of serving this population without support and partnership from metro-area governments.
- **Federal support.** I am encouraged by the [White House's plan to end and prevent homelessness](#) announced in December and will do everything in my power as Mayor to maximize federal resources for our region.
- **Private sector investment** from businesses and philanthropy.
- **Homeless service providers** must continue to evolve programs and services to meet the changing needs.
- Perhaps most importantly, we need **people with lived experience** to inform and shape our policies and approaches. Those who have experienced homelessness and regained stable housing are best positioned to tell us what is most needed and effective.



Courage

As the old adage goes: "Your liberty to swing your fist ends at the tip of my nose." As we seek solutions to the complex challenges of reducing homelessness, **we need to balance the interests of our unhoused neighbors and the broader community.** We must recognize the public health and safety threats that emerge from long-term homeless encampments and preserve the City's authority to remove them. We must provide a variety of safe alternatives to life on the streets (detox, mental health services, shelter, housing) and support our neighbors in making the best choice. However, if they refuse services and supports, we must also be ready to recognize our authority and responsibility to intervene to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the individual and the broader community. Unsheltered living in public spaces is not an acceptable option for our community.

Building partnerships has been a hallmark of my career and will be central to my strategy to reduce homelessness.



My Ideas for Action

To address homelessness, there are five things I will prioritize beginning on Day 1:



Data

Today, Denver relies on incomplete, inaccurate and untimely information – and the data collected across the metro area is also inconsistent, making it harder to work regionally. We must have **more complete and sophisticated data** to inform individualized intervention and better measurement and accountability.

- Ensure the [Metro Denver Homeless Initiative](#), the regional homeless coordinating entity, has the **resources and capacity** it needs to strengthen our regional data infrastructure and the authority to require our service provider partners to contribute to it.
- Engage in **serious data analysis work** to evaluate the impact of our investments to determine what is truly delivering results. Analyze the services being offered and identify gaps in services, redundancies and outcomes to ensure we are getting the best bang for your buck. As Mayor, I'll rely on data to make tough decisions about how and where to invest limited resources.
- Collect data on housing vacancy – sheltering, long-term supportive, transitional, subsidized, and market rate housing inventory – throughout the region and partner with service providers to help them **resolve labor shortages** and other challenges that prevent Denver from maximizing existing housing units.



Sheltering

We have a lot of shelter beds in Denver, but they don't work for most people. We have to **update our shelter system to ensure people are safe, their belongings are safe and they can be with their families and partners**. Our goal will be to evolve and modernize our shelters to ensure they are welcoming and safe.

- Harness and align resources and services regionally and in a coordinated way so that we are using the available funding from federal, state and local sources most efficiently and dispersing services across the metro area effectively. Denver cannot and will not solve this challenge without active participation from our neighbors.
- Reconfigure our existing shelter capacity to create smaller, dispersed shelters. Converting hotel and motel properties to shelters and housing is one essential component of this strategy. In the end, we must ensure a more modern, welcoming and secure sheltering system that meets the needs of the diverse unhoused population – e.g. one that safely accommodates families, youth, transgender people, and pets – and can effectively protect people's belongings.
- Maintain, sustain and expand 24/7 sheltering and day-time drop-in shelters so unhoused people have a safe place to spend their days, off the streets.
- Recognizing that the priority is to house and shelter people, utilize proven strategies to address immediate needs, while we work to build a more adequate supply of long-term housing solutions.

My First 100 Day Priorities

- **Convene regional leaders** – from all 3 sectors, including people with lived experience – to **establish specific goals** for the number of people we are going to house across the region and stop trying to go it alone because it is too expensive and less effective
- Root our shared plan for action in **specific metrics for success** and establish agreements for how we get the data necessary to measure progress
- **Expand Safe Outdoor Spaces** and other sanctioned camping initiatives as a short term step to ending encampments
- Address the impending COVID relief **federal funding cliff**
- Determine how to **engage state and federal partners** to address the substance misuse and mental health inpatient and community treatment shortage
- **Focus on prevention**, so we stem the growth of the problem and can get ahead of it



Housing

Denver simply does not have the inventory of housing necessary to meet demand, nor the diversity of housing types that are needed to be accessible to people exiting homelessness. To get people who have experienced homelessness into housing we will:

- Establish a regional goal using reliable data sources to develop the number of permanent, supportive housing units and the best locations for them.
- Strengthen the coordinated entry system for housing so we can maximize use of housing units we have, to get more of our unhoused neighbors into housing quickly and to ensure greater financial solvency for our service providers.
- Continue and build upon the success of the [City's Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond](#) (SIB) program, which couples on-going housing assistance with comprehensive and integrated supportive services for people who have experienced persistent homelessness and have one or more disabling conditions. Evaluation has shown that more than 79% percent of supportive housing participants remain housed two years after they moved in.¹⁰



Supportive Services

Housing is essential, but it is not sufficient. Whether people need help finding substance misuse treatment and / or employment and / or food assistance (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP) and / or child care (Colorado Child Care Assistance Program – CCCAP) and / or medical and mental health care (Medicaid and CHP+), we need to **invest more in and more effectively deliver support services and case management** that enable people address the other challenges in their lives so they don't lose their housing.

- Effective outreach is essential and will be a foundation to everything we do. We will better compensate and support outreach workers and case managers employed by the City and our community-based agency partners who are interfacing with our vulnerable neighbors everyday. We need to retain and stabilize this workforce so that they can build trusted relationships needed to do the tough work of getting people stabilized.
- Leverage public infrastructure, like health care clinics, libraries, recreation centers, busses and trains and transit stations, to make it easier, faster and more convenient to access services and supports in neighborhoods across Denver and cities across the metro area. People should not have to take time off work and spend hours on public transportation to access needed safety net supports.
- Prioritize giving our unhoused neighbors the dignity of eating indoors.
- Develop and support new solutions to address growing challenge of fentanyl. Recognizing that people dealing with addiction need new and different supports and often are not ready to enter housing, work with regional and state health care partners to increase the number of inpatient mental health and substance misuse treatment facilities.
- Recognize our responsibility to take care of those who can't take care of themselves by advancing and supporting innovative community safety programs. We must provide people with mental health and substance use disorders - people who are extremely vulnerable when left to fend for themselves on the streets - programming that can help them with the underlying needs that have led to their homelessness. To meet this responsibility, we will we work with our state and local government partners to both secure the authority and build the supportive infrastructure needed to make that work.



Prevention

Denver has made meaningful and impactful investments in housing and sheltering in recent years, but the number of new people falling into homelessness has far outstripped the investments we've made. As such, we need to get serious about a prevention-first framework that keeps people in housing. There are two specific populations that we should particularly focus prevention efforts on: young adults aging out of the child welfare system and seniors.

- Help people stay in the housing they have through publicly and privately supported rent assistance programs and master-lease housing pools. Partner with workers at our Department of Human Services, landlords and employers – both public and private sector employers – to identify people who are at risk of losing their homes and proactively help them stabilize their housing BEFORE they face eviction.
- More closely align the work being done in the Department of Housing Stability with the Department of Human Services to better serve people and prevent homelessness in the first place. For example, ensure that people eligible for federally and state funded benefits like health insurance and child care are getting the supports they need to stabilize them financially.

*Working collaboratively and guided by my values of compassion and optimism, I will bring the **focus, attention and accountability** necessary to restore the Promise of Denver. Join me. Visit KellyBrough.com to get involved.*

SOURCES:

1. [Metro Denver homeless population increased by 12.8%, preliminary data show, 9News, July 25, 2022](#)
2. Ibid
3. [CO Dept of Local Affairs, Division of Housing, September 2021 presentation "Homelessness in Colorado"](#)
4. [State of Homelessness report 2021-22, produced by Metro Denver Homeless Initiative](#)
5. [2022 KIDS COUNT in Colorado report produced by the Colorado Children's Campaign](#)
6. ["Employment alone isn't enough to solve homelessness, study suggests" UChicago News, June 29, 2021](#)
7. [Homelessness in Metro Denver: An Opportunity to Transform Resources & the Existing System, Common Sense Institute, October 2022](#)
8. [Deaths among Denver area homeless nearly double from five years ago, Colorado Sun, December 30, 2021](#)
9. ["Denver City Council approves \\$1.66 billion budget for 2023," Denver Gazette, November 14, 2022, retrieved January 14, 2023](#)
10. [As reported on the City's website](#)