

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

# Research & Results: human-centered solutions to unsheltered homelessness

## RESEARCH-BASED PRACTICAL GUIDANCE TO ADDRESS UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

**C**ommunities across our nation have seen a rise in the number of people living in unsheltered settings. This increase has brought new scrutiny to how localities are assisting people in resolving their homelessness. Along with the challenge of connecting people with stable housing options, the presence of people living outside creates conflicts over shared access to and permissible activities within public spaces. Such conflicts can lead to punitive or coercive responses that contrast with effective, person-centered solutions.

In this series of issue briefs, we draw upon lessons from nine localities that have taken measures that aspire to be non-punitive and reduce harm for unsheltered individuals who rely on public spaces when other housing is unavailable. These briefs provide practical guidance by highlighting approaches taken by these sites, thereby assisting other localities in developing innovative approaches to addressing unsheltered homelessness.

### ARNOLD VENTURES SEEKS TO SUPPORT PROMISING INTERVENTIONS

Arnold Ventures (AV) is a philanthropic organization with the mission to invest in evidence-based solutions that maximize opportunities and minimize injustice. In funding this project, Arnold Ventures seeks to promote practices and policies that reduce harm to individuals and redirect them to care, effectively moving individuals experiencing homelessness out of places that are harmful to sites that provide safe housing and stability. Findings from this study will help Arnold Ventures' Criminal Justice Initiative structure its support for promising interventions on this topic.

Through these briefs, the findings are being disseminated publicly to provide practical guidance to those interested in further developing innovative solutions to addressing unsheltered homelessness.

### UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

**When people are living in unsheltered settings, they stay in makeshift arrangements such as encampments, cars and RVs without access to power or sanitation, abandoned buildings, public parks, and other places not meant for human habitation.**

### RESEARCH & RESULTS:

*human-centered solutions to unsheltered homelessness* is a series of briefs and profiles that contain many terms that are part of the working vocabulary of those engaged in addressing unsheltered homelessness. *For explanations of these terms see the Glossary document.*

## NINE SITES VISITED

These sites feature approaches that have demonstrated positive results in getting people out of unsheltered homelessness and into lasting housing solutions in ways that offered alternatives to coercion or punishment.

### Diverse locations with diverse challenges

To the extent possible, the sites represent the major regions of the United States, including cities of different sizes, and cover rural, suburban, and tribal areas. These locations feature an array of socioeconomic and housing market conditions. We were particularly interested in sites with innovative collaborations between homeless services providers, first responders (police, fire, EMS), and local governments.

### Site visit interviews

Project investigators conducted a 3-day visit to each of these nine sites. In doing so, we interviewed homeless assistance system leaders, law enforcement officials, government leaders, homeless services providers, and other key stakeholders; and received tours of programs, services, and facilities.

### Focusing on engagement and effective strategies

Our focus was on how localities engaged unsheltered individuals, what strategies were effective in providing people with access to both temporary and permanent housing, and the degree to which local government and business entities afforded support. Special attention was given to the role of law enforcement and other first responders in these efforts, and how diverse organizations strategically collaborated in addressing unsheltered homelessness.

#### GREATER ROCKFORD, IL



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#### NEW ORLEANS, LA



#### PHILADELPHIA, PA



#### PORTLAND/MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OR



#### SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, CA



#### SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA



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#### STATE OF MINNESOTA



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#### SYRACUSE/ONONDAGA COUNTY, NY



#### WICHITA/SEDGWICK COUNTY, KS



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Barbara Poppe** is the founder of Barbara Poppe and Associates and the former executive director of the United States Interagency Council on

Homelessness. During her tenure, Opening Doors, the first comprehensive federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, was launched in June 2010. Barbara Poppe and Associates, established in 2014, is an independent consulting firm that develops the capacity of communities and organizations to tackle complex issues using a collaborative systems approach to achieves results and impact.



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where he directs the Center for Community Research and Service. His research on homelessness has included pioneering work on using administrative and survey data to better understand the impacts and costs of homelessness across a range of services systems.



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