Call to Action: Housing Navigation Centers – What and Why?

Right now, the need is critical for a **second Housing Navigation Center with 24/7 shelter in North Jefferson (and/or Adams) County**, and we urge our APA members to respond to this **Call to Action (at the end of this page):**

- With this winter's continuing frigid Arctic temperatures, we especially see the need for 24/7 shelter and permanent housing for our unhoused neighbors.
- Jefferson County has relied for years on its faith communities and nonprofits to help, but due to lack of funding, many local resources such as the Severe Weather Shelter Network and the Safe Parking Initiative have recently had to close.
- Almost a decade ago, a number of Jefferson County nonprofits formed a group called Heading Home, to eliminate homelessness or make it as infrequent as possible.
- Research by Heading Home resulted in a Jeffco Gap Analysis and Emergency Shelter Needs report (see pages 14-15), which identified the need for **two Housing Navigation Centers** (with 24/7 year-round shelter) in Jefferson County.
- A Navigation Center is a one-stop location to access help for critical things like: obtaining vital documents (IDs, driver's license), assistance with obtaining benefits (such as food, health care, disability), assistance or referrals to resources for mental and physical health needs, and help finding employment and permanent housing.
- A Navigation Center needs to be paired with a low barrier 24/7 shelter, to allow unhoused clients to meet basic hygiene and safety needs, meals, access to publicly available showers and laundry, a safe place to sleep and to store their belongings while they are working or meeting with case managers to access services and gain self-sufficiency.
- Jefferson County dedicated $6M of their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to help establish the two Housing Navigation Centers (one in south/central Jeffco and one in North Jeffco). Those funds are still available, and Jeffco county commissioners re-affirmed their support for the Navigation Centers on 1/28/25. In addition, other partners may include Westminster and Adams County.
- The city of Lakewood worked with the nonprofit Recovery Works to create the south/central Navigation Center. With financial support from Lakewood and state grants from Colorado, Recovery Works was able to buy their buildings and also operates a severe weather overnight shelter with paid staff. They plan to renovate this year to allow 24/7 shelter, which is critical as most severe weather shelters close at 7 am, forcing the unhoused to find places to stay with their belongings during the day.
- The city of Arvada committed to help with the north Jeffco Navigation center, and purchased two properties for potential locations. However, political roadblocks and community pushback have stalled any progress, and on **1/27/25 city council voted to sell the Early College of Arvada site.**
- In the interim, the nonprofit Mission Arvada at the Rising Church has been operating as a Navigation Center (in an inadequate building, only open 9 am to 1 pm, M-F and relying almost exclusively on volunteers rather than city supported paid staff).
- Mission Arvada has also had to stay open on extreme weather nights, with volunteer assistance from some local churches.

So…The need for a second Navigation Center with 24/7 shelter in North Jefferson (and/or Adams) County remains critical.

CALL TO ACTION: Please speak or write to our Arvada City Council members – use council@arvada.org. APA also urges you to write to the Jefferson County and Adams County commissioners. Please urge all of them to work on a Regional Coordinated effort to find a location for a Housing Navigation Center in North Jefferson or Adams County. For Jeffco, use commish@jeffco.us and for Adams County commissioners@adcogov.org. More information may be found at Jefferson County Commissioners and Adams County Commissioners.

Moral Messaging

- As a community we have the responsibility to treat others as we wish to be treated. Many people are only one or two paychecks away from homelessness.
- Every person has inherent worth and dignity.

A Complex Issue

- It is a challenge to ensure that all Arvadans have access to the basic necessities of life.
- Homelessness is a complex problem that can impact the entire community.
    - Homelessness can be caused by a variety of things including loss of a job, high rent or mortgage, relationship problems, catastrophic/chronic illness, substance abuse, mental illness, domestic abuse, disabilities, or being evicted.
- Systems are required to address issues such as mental illness and substance abuse.
- It is vital to remember **all** who become unhoused are experiencing trauma of some sort.

The Facts

- Number of unhoused in Arvada:
    - **2022** – 201
    - **2023** –298
    - **2024** – (about one third of homeless in Jeffco)
- There are both *visible* homeless (those you see on the streets) and *invisible* homeless (those living in their car or "couch-surfing" with friends). Therefore, the above numbers are conservative.
- Many of the homeless in Arvada are either from Arvada or the immediate surrounding area.
- For **Families with Children**, assistance is available mainly through Jefferson County (Human Services), as well as from nonprofits. For **Individuals/Couples** (those without children), assistance is mostly from City navigators and nonprofits.

Jefferson County Data (Point In Time 2024):

a. 925 people identified (increase of 8% from 2023)
b. 1 in 2 are Newly Homeless (less than a year and first time)
c. 300% increase in unsheltered homelessness since 2022
d. Jefferson County has doubled in total homeless since 2022
e. #1 reason for homelessness is the inability to pay rent/mortgage
f. **Arvada accounts for 1/3 of total homeless within Jefferson count**

The Cost

- The entire community shares the cost of homelessness.
- A person living in chronic homelessness costs the taxpayer an average of $36,000 per year (emergency care, temporary sheltering, police enforcement, courts, incarceration, etc.)
- Providing affordable housing and other services decreases this amount by 49%.

The Need

- At present, neither Arvada nor Jefferson County have a 24/7, year-round shelter.

- Mission Arvada in Olde Town is currently the only day-shelter (and navigation center) and is only open from 9am - 1pm Monday thru Friday.
- During severe weather, certain churches were previously available as overnight shelters. This winter, Mission Arvada (with help from a few churches) is doing overnight extreme weather sheltering.
- The current shelters do not provide the level of stability required to empower the homeless to work towards self-reliance.

"Housing First"

The *Housing First* model is based on the proven theory that people must have access to basic necessities before being able to achieve quality of life or pursue personal goals. Those necessities include:

- Stability.
- Resources such as an address and an ID which increases the possibility of employment.
- Meals, along with a place to shower and do laundry.
- "Wrap-around" services (i.e., assistance accessing benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid).
- Since 2007, when supportive housing was first offered, nationwide investments in supportive housing models have decreased chronic homelessness by 30%.

Navigation Center

A Navigation Center is a comprehensive resource that provides not only 24/7 shelter, but other services in one location - such as mental health counseling, employment assistance, and help accessing Medicaid, food stamps and other programs.

- The City of Arvada has contacted neighboring cities (including Westminster) and Jefferson and Adams counties, foundations, nonprofits, and others to help create a Navigation Center. Capital cost funds are available– the main issue is the location!
- Remember that *Current* Navigation centers in Jeffco (Mission Arvada and RecoveryWorks in Lakewood) are only open M-F for part of the day…so unhoused clients do not have a place to shelter after hours, on nights, or weekends – and they have NO place to safely store their belongings-- so you often see them in city areas carrying everything with them.

How Will You Be Able To Support a Navigation Center in Arvada/N.Jeffco/Adams County?

- Volunteer help and financial support of nonprofits (desperately needed at Mission Arvada for severe/extreme weather).
- Providing education for your groups, congregations and the community on the need to assist the unhoused. Please use these Fact and Messaging sheets to educate!
- Writing to the decision-makers! Contact Arvada City Council members at council@arvada.org and Jefferson County Commissioners at commish@jeffco.us and Adams County Commissioners at commissioners@adcogov.org, urging them to cooperatively work on a Regional solution—asap!
- **Attending Upcoming Community Engagement Meetings that may be held in the City of Arvada.**

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PERSONAL STORIES OF UNHOUSED CLIENTS IN ARVADA. – courtesy of Mission Arvada

A Family:

Meet Dave Doyle. For the past year and a half, Dave has relied on Mission Arvada's food pantry to help make ends meet. As a warehouseman for a tire company, his salary only stretches so far,

especially with the responsibility of providing for his parents, wife, stepson, six dogs, and a cat. Dave was managing with the help of his brother, but when his brother tragically passed away from a stroke in January 2023, the financial strain became overwhelming.
"We wouldn't eat if it wasn't for Mission Arvada," Dave shares.

A Senior:

Meet Donna Beardsley, a resilient 70-year-old who has been a part of the Mission Arvada community since October 2023. Her journey here began when someone she met at the Arvada Library across the street referred her to us.
Donna's husband died five years ago, and last September, she found herself without a place to live after her landlord refused to renew her lease. With no stable place to call home, she moved between friends and family, often finding herself sleeping outdoors. She found some solace on a secluded bench on the grounds of a church, where she was able to sleep every night except Wednesdays and Sundays.
"Things were going okay," Donna recalls, "but then, well, I fell off the wagon." The stress of her situation and the influence of a new group of 'friends' led her back into alcohol abuse. "That's when things really tanked," she says. "I was out of control, and non-drinkers didn't want me around."
Determined to turn her life around, Donna checked into a rehab facility and successfully completed the program. She's now working closely with her case manager at Mission Arvada to secure housing and is excited to be nearing the top of the waiting list. Meanwhile, a longtime friend has welcomed her to stay until she can get a place of her own,

A Resident Born in Arvada:

Ryan, who was born and raised in Arvada, became homeless in 2020 during the Covid Pandemic. He was unemployed and struggling with substance abuse issues. From time to time, he could stay with his elderly mom, but when she passed away he had nowhere to stay. He never wanted to be a burden on his siblings, so he stayed outdoors and began coming to Mission Arvada for meals, showers, and clothing.
Ryan began working with our case manager and with the Homeless Navigator for the City of Wheat Ridge to recover vital documents and apply for subsidized housing. He was matched for housing last year through the City of Wheat Ridge, and moved into a unit last summer. Ryan is now clean and sober, and he started a new job recently! Mission Arvada was able to help him purchase new steel-toed work boots over the weekend. We are so proud of Ryan!

A Veteran:

Born in in Denver in 1969, "between the moon landing and Woodstock," Jeremy was the oldest of seven brothers. But life threw its challenges at him early on with his parents' divorce, leading to a childhood spent shuttling between family in Colorado and California.
In 1988, at the age of 19, Jeremy joined the army with dreams of building a career and marrying his high school sweetheart. Assigned to the 10th Mountain Division in Fort Drum, New York, he hoped for a bright future. However, life had other plans as his sweetheart joined the Marines, leaving their marriage plans behind. Disappointed and disheartened, Jeremy chose not to re-enlist when his term was up in 1992.
Over the years, Jeremy faced a series of hardships, including a marriage that didn't last but gave him a wonderful son, now 24 years old. Heartbroken and carrying the weight of a tumultuous past, Jeremy took to the streets "by choice" in 2017. His marriage had ended, his parents and one of his brothers had died, he had suffered on-the-job injuries, and a DUI conviction had cost him his driver's license.

Alcohol had taken hold of Jeremy's life, and he candidly admitted, "I became an alcoholic in the army." Growing up with alcoholic parents, it wasn't a significant leap from being a social drinker to a full-blown addiction. Numerous attempts to quit on his own yielded no lasting success. In his own words, "I'm my own worst enemy, but I do want to get better. I'm taking medicine for it now, and I'm working hard to kick this thing."

Through Mission Arvada, Jeremy found a lifeline in STRIDE, a provider of medical services for low-income individuals, to battle his addiction. Thanks to their care and support, he is making significant progress in his journey towards recovery.