

Building a Homeless Service Center:

How to gain political and community buy -in



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Date: October 27, 2025

Our Community

- > First suburb of New Orleans
- > Approximately 430,000 residents
- > Urban, suburban, and rural
- > Most diverse parish in Louisiana
- > 17% below poverty rate
49% below ALICE

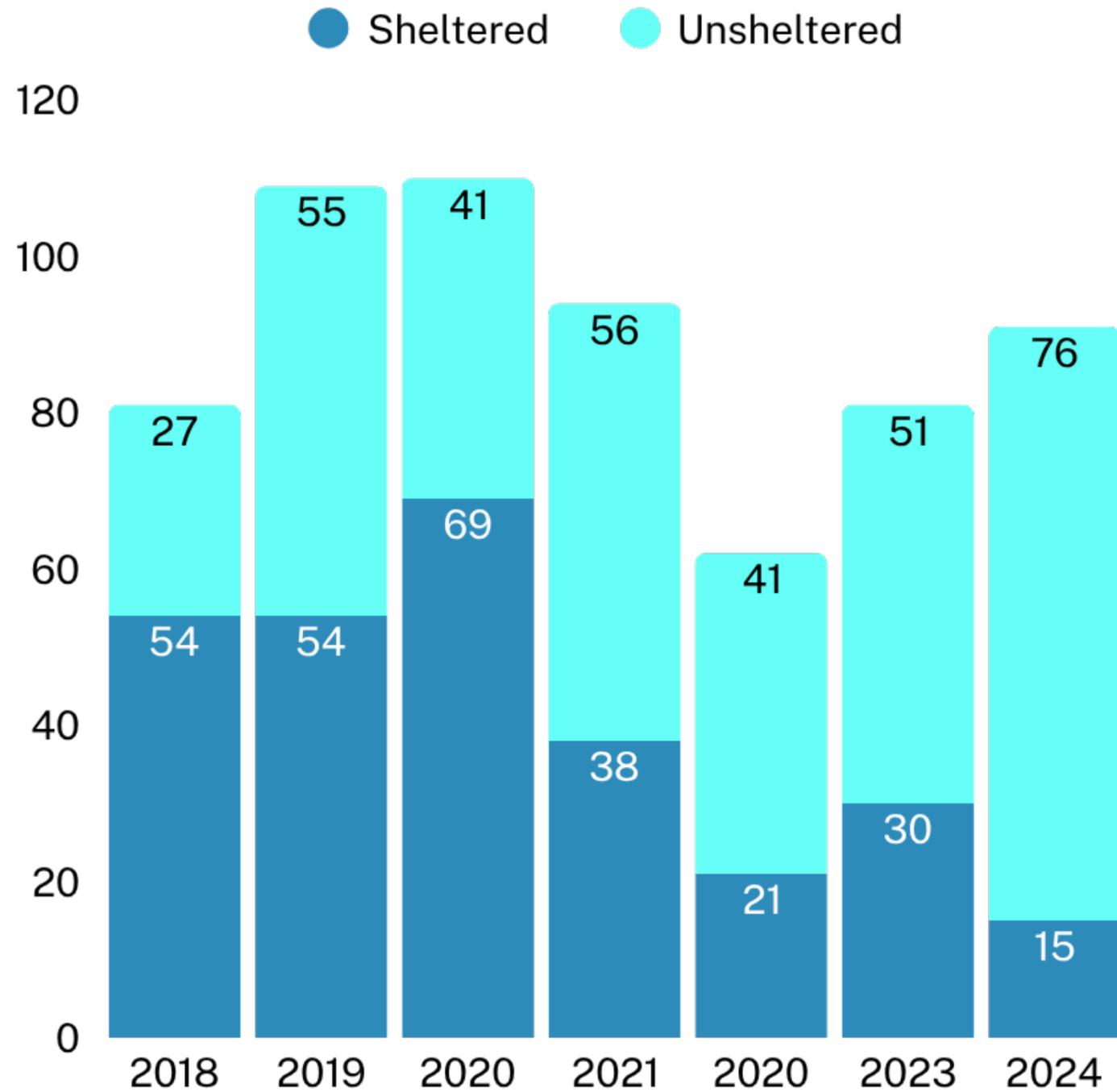


Our Stats

- > 20% of residents rated poor mental health 14 out of the last 30 days
- > 64% of residents believe that mental health is a major problem in our community
- > Highest rate of drug related deaths in Louisiana, more than 3 times higher than any other parish
- > Homicide is the 5th leading cause of death for Black residents



Number of People Experiencing Homelessness



Identifying our Opportunity

- > Increase in homelessness due to COVID eviction restrictions being lifted
- > Increase in public complaints about homelessness, local news coverage, acknowledgement from elected officials that homelessness was a concern
- > Increase in funding for housing, substance use, and public health due to COVID; and Opioid Litigation
- > Staff expertise and community connections

Homeless Task Force

- > Council passed Resolution creating Task Force
- > Key leaders as Chair and Vice Chair
- > Provided guidance to get the right people on the task force, including people with lived experience
- > Participation from law enforcement and business groups



Homeless Task Force

- > Thoughtful agenda topics, presentations, and discussion moderation
- > Open to the public, ensured that key voices not appointed to task force could speak
- > Used data to correctly illustrate the needs and present best practices
- > Pre-met with many task force members and council members
- > Consistent use of people first language

Strategy to End Homelessness

- > Centralized Coordination
- > Defined Housing Path
- > Wrap Around Services



Start Small, but Start Smart

- > Which project has the smallest budget?
- > Which project will be the fastest to launch?
- > Which project will have the greatest impact?
- > Which project can be done with the least amount of controversy?

Current Projects

- > Created centralized intake phone line
- > Developed centralized resource list
- > Increased outreach and case management capacity
- > Created Landlord Engagement position
- > Launched Homeless Service Center
- > Utilizing motels as temporary housing

Homeless Service Center: Step by Step

- > Got task force approval
November 2024
- > Found community partner
December 2024
- > Identified multiple funding options
December 2024
- > Got Council approval
January 2025
- > Completed contracts for funding
April 2025
- > Planned out services and data collection
May 2025
- > Launched programming
July 2025
- > “Announced” opening
September 2025

Key Take Aways

- > Change the narrative and language around homelessness
- > Agree to concept before specifics
- > Use trusted partners and messengers
- > Start small, but start smart
- > Build on trust

Questions