

Plan to House Every Unhoused Person in Cambridge

Goal

Between January 1 and December 31, 2022, we want the City of Cambridge to use resources of residents, non-profits, institutions and local government to rehouse 400 individuals experiencing homelessness, and functionally end homelessness in Cambridge by December 1, 2023. Housing is a human right, and this goal is both possible and necessary. It is past time that we recognize that homelessness in Cambridge is a policy failure, and take definitive action to remedy our shortcomings.

What

We propose creating the Cambridge Unhoused Stipend Program (CUSP). The program embraces a Housing First approach to ending homelessness, and performs three key activities: Identifies eligible households, finds and secures available units, and moves eligible households into those homes, providing long-term supportive services as necessary.

How

Funding - CUSP's estimated budget is ~ \$160 million over 10 years. This is approximately \$100/year/person in Cambridge. To finance this program, we propose an initial allocation of \$10 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, matched dollar for dollar by both Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Implementation - To ensure equitable access and sustainability, we believe CUSP should be created under Cambridge's Department of Human Services Programs (DHSP), and ideally in the future be relocated to the Department of Housing Stability. The program will require dedicated program management and case management staff, employed by the Department.

To identify eligible households, CUSP builds on existing eligibility criteria set by HUD for Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) utilization. CUSP loosens documentation requirements and permanently codifies good faith attestations as appropriate for establishing initial eligibility.

To find available units, CUSP creates two complementary housing acquisition strategies: a landlord incentives program (LPP) that reserves particular housing units for CUSP eligible individuals, and a general housing search support program to help eligible participants find ideal units and sustainably afford them.

To coordinate move-in and supportive services, CUSP creates a basic service bundle and establishes city-held contracts for fulfilling these services. In addition, it empowers a local government staff member as a central referral point, and allows them to activate the service bundle on a household's move-in date. Finally, the program recognizes that some households may need ongoing services; the program also establishes channels for coordinating additional supports to keep folks stably housed.

Goal



We want to end homelessness in Cambridge. There are about 600 people who don't have a home in Cambridge. We want to make sure that everyone has housing by the end of next year (2023).

Our Idea



We think there should be one city government program that ends homelessness by giving people housing - no strings attached. We think the program should 1) Find people who are homeless, 2) Find good housing for them, and 3) Help them move into housing.

How Could We Do It?



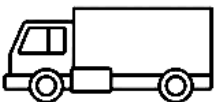
Our best guess is that the program would cost the city \$100 per person, over 10 years. We think that the program should be paid for with money from the United States government, and with donations from large colleges in the city.



We think the new program should use the same forms as the existing Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program. We think that people should be able to say they are homeless, and provide proof later.



We think the program could help people find housing in 2 ways. First, it could give money to landlords to keep some homes for people in the program. Second, it could help people in the program search for their own home that meets their specific needs.



We think the program should help people meet all of their basic needs: food, clothing, cookware, furniture and cleaning supplies. We think it should help people get their belongings, and transport them to their new home.

What Do You Think? What Are Your Ideas?

We welcome any ideas, questions, feedback at projectrighttoshelter@gmail.com.