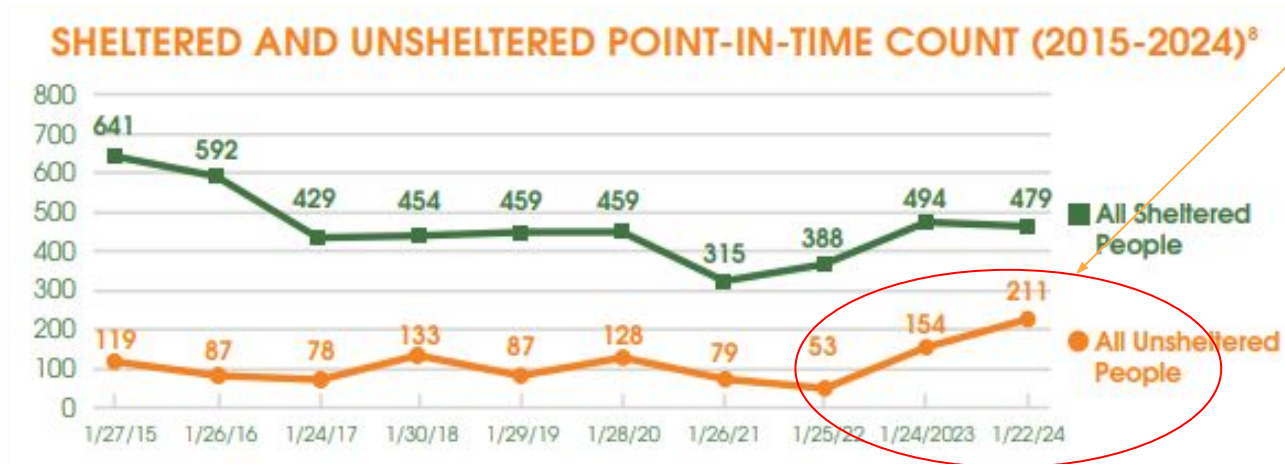


# **Akron's Winter Safe Sleeping Space Proposal**

Emergency Winter Camp:  
December through April of this year in Akron.

# Highest Number of Unsheltered People Since 2015.

Unsheltered homelessness is higher than observed at any time during the last decade. The number of individuals who were unsheltered, living in encampments, abandoned buildings or their cars, **increased by nearly 300%** from the 2022 to 2024 PIT Count



# Funding Abruptly Ended

“We had close to \$45 million in funding from the Cares Act for rental assistance for two years, and then we also received COVID dollars to do some additional things like extra rapid rehousing, some labor mitigation, and other innovative and creative things that we weren’t able to do in the past,” she said.

But the funding abruptly ended in early 2022, dropping to \$7 million a year, while the cost of food, services and housing rapidly increased.

- CoC Executive Director Mar-quetta Boddie.

<https://signalakron.org/akron-homeless-numbers/>

# MEET AARON



# Aaron is severely mentally ill.

Last winter, Aaron had 3 toes amputated due to frostbite. He wonders most nights unsheltered, and alone. Oftentimes I find him without shoes and socks in the middle of winter.



This is a picture of Aaron sleeping unsheltered on a below freezing day.

# He needs support.



Multiple organizations have given him multiple tents. Even after being put up for him, they ultimately end collapsed and destroyed. This is how I found him living in a tent I had set up for him 3 days earlier.

“We also know that removing encampments without providing access to low-barrier shelter and a range of housing options does not work.” - USICH Senior Regional Advisor Katy Miller  
<https://www.usich.gov/news-events/news/responding-growing-crisis-unsheltered-homelessness-and-encampments>

# Meet Harley

Her birth name is Stephanie. But she prefers Harley.

She has been diagnosed with Schizoaffective disorder - a mental health condition that is marked by a mix of schizophrenia symptoms, such as hallucinations and delusions.

She has been through a wide variety of jail times and the forced medication program in New Day Court. Nothing has worked. She always ends up untreated on the street.



# Many people are afraid and hateful towards Harley

I've found her sleeping outside on a below freezing night with no coat or blankets because she had been thrown out of the abandoned house she was staying in.

She is always at risk on the street because many people don't like her.

She desperately needs shelter and protection.

They currently are accusing her of being a witch.



## What we are asking for:

### **WE JUST WANT A SPACE FOR THE WINTER.**

- The space will be away from houses and businesses.
- There will be trash service and porta potties.
- It will be kept clean.
- No illegal drug use will be permitted.
- No money or resources are required of the city.

# Tacoma's Successful Model

## Similar-Sized City, Similar Challenges

### Started with Basic Mitigation Site:

- Time-limited winter response
- Away from residential areas
- Basic health & safety amenities
  - Portable toilets
  - Trash service
  - Basic security
- No cost to residents
- Coordinated service delivery

### Results:

- Improved service delivery
- Better health outcomes
- More successful housing placements
- Cost-effective first step
- Led to more comprehensive solutions

"In order to expedite the closure of encampments in Tacoma, the city created a mitigation site nearby to offer basic health and safety amenities... This approach proved an effective first step toward more permanent solutions." - Tacoma Strategy Report

# Federal Support for Winter Safe Sleeping Space

## April 2024: US Interagency Council on Homelessness Specifically

### Recommends:

- Communities must provide safe spaces while working on permanent solutions
- Basic needs must be met:
  - Safe and sanitary conditions
  - Restrooms and trash service
  - Basic health and safety amenities

## HUD Research Shows Current Reality:

- Cities already spend \$1,672-\$6,208 per person annually on uncoordinated responses
- Most spending goes to repeated relocations
- Having people in one location makes services more efficient

## How Our Plan Aligns with Federal Guidelines:

- Safe, designated space
- Basic services (porta potties, trash service)
- Away from residential areas
- Coordinated service delivery
- Resident input in planning

"Interim solutions should ensure voluntary, sanitary, and safe shelter with few programmatic requirements to serve all those in need." - USICH April 2024

# Why City Leadership Is Critical

## HUD Report Findings on Effective Response

### Cities Must Take Direct Leadership Because:

- Cities can move faster than CoCs in crisis situations
- Federal funds can't cover basic encampment needs
- Cities are already funding most encampment responses
- Emergency winter response needs immediate action

### Successful Examples:

- Houston: Led by Mayor's Special Assistant
- Tacoma: Led by Neighborhood Services
- San Jose: Led by Housing Department
- Chicago: Led by Mayor's Task Force

"City governments were by far the largest source of funding for encampment responses in FY 2019." - HUD Report 2024



# The Huge Opportunity Of A Dedicated Safe Sleeping Space

Whether you are a police officer, mental health worker, homeless service provider, parole officer or healthcare provider, they all say the same thing:

HAVING THESE PEOPLE IN ONE LOCATION MAKES THEIR JOBS EASIER.

They know where to go to find the people they are working with.

Our Safe Sleeping Space will be open to all city officials and workers. In fact, we WANT social workers to be involved. That's the quickest way to get these people the help and services they need.

Living isolated and alone in the woods and abandoned houses is the worst possible scenario for everyone.

# The Akron Houseless Community Trusts Me

I can create a space that is safe for  
them and safe for Akron.

**PLEASE LET'S TALK ABOUT HOW  
WE CAN MAKE THIS A REALITY**

Sage Lewis

[sage@houselessmovement.org](mailto:sage@houselessmovement.org)

330-416-7519

