

To access the Agenda and Backup Materials electronically, go to [the City of Grand Junction Website](#). To participate or watch the meeting virtually register for the [GoToWebinar](#).



**GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, JUNE 30, 2025
WORKSHOP, 5:30 PM
FIRE DEPARTMENT TRAINING ROOM
625 UTE AVENUE**

1. Discussion Topics

- a. One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan
- b. Overview of the Housing Needs Assessment, Strategy and Implementation Progress
- c. Overview of the Unhoused Needs Assessment, Strategy and Implementation Progress
- d. Housing Affordability/Attainability Code Task Force
- e. City Council Community Engagement Strategy Discussion

2. City Council Communication

An unstructured time for Councilmembers to discuss current matters, share ideas for possible future consideration by Council, and provide information from board & commission participation.

3. Next Workshop Topics

4. Other Business

- a. Request for Interview Teams for Grand Junction Housing Authority and Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals

What is the purpose of a Workshop?

The purpose of the Workshop is to facilitate City Council discussion through analyzing

information, studying issues, and clarifying problems. The less formal setting of the Workshop promotes conversation regarding items and topics that may be considered at a future City Council meeting.

How can I provide my input about a topic on tonight's Workshop agenda?

Individuals wishing to provide input about Workshop topics can:

1. Send input by emailing a City Council member ([Council email addresses](#)) or call one or more members of City Council (970-244-1504)
 2. Provide information to the City Manager (citymanager@gjcity.org) for dissemination to the City Council. If your information is submitted prior to 3 p.m. on the date of the Workshop, copies will be provided to Council that evening. Information provided after 3 p.m. will be disseminated the next business day.
 3. Attend a Regular Council Meeting (generally held the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall) and provide comments during "Public Comments."
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Grand Junction City Council

Workshop Session

Item #1.a.

Meeting Date: June 30, 2025

Presented By: Tamra Allen, Community Development Director, Tim Lehrbach, Principal Planner

Department: Community Development

Submitted By: Tamra Allen, Community Development Director

Information

SUBJECT:

One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City's One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan took 22 months to complete and was adopted by the City Council on December 16, 2020. The Plan superseded and replaced the 2010 Joint Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan adopted by the City and Mesa County in February 2010. The City's Comprehensive Plan is used as a blueprint for the City and the foundation of the Plan is the community's vision for its future. This vision, as articulated by the community, guides the goals and strategies included in the plan that informs city implementation priorities, future growth, services, and development in Grand Junction. The Plan was derived directly from ideas and themes generated during the community outreach process.

The 2020 One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan (Plan) is a 10 to 20-year plan that is applicable to the City's Urban Growth Area, an area generally located between 21 Road on the west, J Road on the north, 32 Road on the east and south to a boundary approximately one-quarter of a mile north of the Mesa County Landfill and will supersede and replace the 2010 Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan. The Plan is a product of 22 months of public outreach, stakeholder discussions, contributions by consultants, and work by City of Grand Junction staff. Whereas many plans take a narrower focus and are primarily intended to address future growth and land use within a community, this plan is truly comprehensive as it addressed the community's vision for a wide range of topics. The Plan identifies and establishes the City's vision by establishing plan principles, goals and strategies that will guide Grand Junction in reaching its vision.

Staff will provide a presentation and overview of the plan at this workshop.

BACKGROUND OR DETAILED INFORMATION:

The information in this section is excerpted from the information presented as part of the staff report when City Council considered adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in December 2020. The full plan as well as the initial Issues and Opportunities Report can be accessed using these links:

- [Full Plan Document \(PDF\)](#)
- [Chapter 1: Introduction \(PDF\)](#)
- [Chapter 2: Plan Principles \(PDF\)](#)
- [Chapter 3: Land Use and Growth \(PDF\)](#)
- [Chapter 4: Area-Specific Policies \(PDF\)](#)
- [Chapter 5: Implementation and Monitoring \(PDF\)](#)
- [Appendices \(PDF\)](#)
- [Issues and Opportunities Report \(PDF\)](#)

The One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan is an update to the City of Grand Junction's previous Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 2010, and superceded and replaced the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. The updated Plan addresses changes that have occurred in the last decade and sets a course to guide policy and decision-making for the next 10 to 20 years.

The One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan addresses issues within the municipal boundary of the City as well as in its planning area, specifically the Urban Development Boundary. The Plan is truly comprehensive and includes topics such as public safety, transportation, parks and recreation, education, community identity, inclusivity, resiliency, economic development, and resource stewardship, all of which collectively work to achieve the community's vision.

Plan Purpose

Grand Junction is authorized to prepare a comprehensive plan as a long-range guiding document to achieve its vision and goals under Colorado Revised Statutes §30-28-106 and §31-23-206. Under the Statute the only required elements is for the Plan to contain a recreational and tourism uses element which are covered under Plan Principle 2 Resilient and Diverse Economy and Plan Principle 7 Great Places and Recreation both found in Chapter 2 of the Plan. The One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan addresses issues within the municipal boundary of the City as well as in its planning area including topics that not only addresses the diversity of topics listed above, but also how they interconnect, setting the City on track for efficiency and coordinated action. The One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan also provides the policy framework for regulatory tools like zoning, and annexations and establishes a framework for fiscally responsible and well-managed growth. It is the City's 3-Mile Plan as required under Colorado State Statutes.

The Comprehensive Plan is not just a policy document for the City organization; it is a guide for the entire community that envisions the kind of place the community desires in the future, sets the overall direction for the changes we want, and outlines the steps the community will need to take to get there. It is not a definitive course of action or a legally binding obligation of what must be done. Rather, it is a guidance document that describes what the community would like to become and what steps and actions, partnerships, and policies will move the City forward to achieving its vision.

Public Engagement/Planning Process

The One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan is founded on an inclusive and engaging community outreach process designed to gather input from a wide range of community stakeholders. This included residents, business owners and operators, developers and property owners, City officials and staff, and service providers. Engagement for each phase of the process emphasized a range of tools including small/focused group discussions, interactive online engagement, surveys, workshops, and presentations to groups across the City. The City also strived to provide avenues for engagement to segments of the community that historically do not readily engage in planning processes and to seek input that better aligns with demographics; including targeted outreach for students and youth, those that are or identify as Latino or Hispanic ethnicity and Spanish-speaking residents. Collecting input and facilitating discussion, outreach has helped to identify the issues, opportunities, potential projects, key strengths and assets, and overall public vision as the community moves forward. The feedback received has helped to guide recommendations of One Grand Junction, ensuring that the Plan is responsive to the community it serves.

The City hosted a total of 33 focus groups and meetings, including an Advisory Committee Workshop, a Community Workshop, a Business Workshop, and a Visioning Workshop during the early months of the planning process and three public events held at the end of the planning process to review and obtain feedback on the draft document, One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan. This outreach ensured the Plan is built on a variety of stakeholder input and feedback, both in-person and on-demand via online participation. In-person focus groups and workshops, online participation, and immersive outreach created a range of ways for participants to engage in the planning process. Although COVID-19 and the pandemic caused a partial delay to the project timeline, the project team adapted by expanding digital engagement options, and pushing for quality despite the obvious challenges.

Across all outreach formats, including in-person, online, and immersive outreach, there have been over 2200 engagement responses, each representing an instance of public participation. The term “engagement response” is used to acknowledge that an individual participant may engage with the planning process more than once. A list of meetings held during the planning process is included in the attachments.

Additionally, the City appointed a group of 16 citizens called the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) that met multiple times during the planning process to provide critical feedback, guidance, and direction on the formation of the plan.

One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan

The Plan consists of five chapters and an Appendix.

Chapter 1: Introduction - The introduction presents the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, how it should be used and updated, key factors in its development, and its organization. It addresses these topic areas, providing information on the Planning Area, planning timeframe, and the Plan's relationship with the Zoning Code and the Municipal Code and other Plans. It introduces the planning process and explains how public outreach and engagement occurred.

Chapter 2: Plan Principles – This chapter establishes the community vision that guides the Comprehensive Plan and establishes goals and strategies for implementation. There are eleven Plan Principles that guide the community in reaching its vision. Each starts with evaluating present conditions, asking “Where we are today?” Then it asks the question, “Where are we going?” and takes on the perspective of Grand Junction 20 years from now as a way of establishing what the community would like to have accomplished by 2040. Following this is a third question, “How will we get there?” This is where the plan draws a line from existing conditions to future goals, identifying specific strategies to help achieve those goals. The eleven Plan Principles include:

1. Collective Identity. This Plan Principle looks at preserving, promoting and celebrating Grand Junction's identity, diversity and history.
2. Resilient and Diverse Economy. This Plan Principle seeks to foster a vibrant, diverse and resilient economy, supporting a workforce, promoting business growth, supporting our tourism industry and investing in key infrastructure that supports businesses.
3. Responsible and Managed Growth. This Plan Principle supports fiscally responsible growth and annexation policies, encouraging infill and redevelopment, collaborating with regional entities and service providers, maintaining and building urban level infrastructure, and planning for and ensuring fiscal responsible delivery of City services and infrastructure.
4. Downtown and University Districts. This Plan Principle seeks to help these areas to become more livable while balancing needs, strengthening multi-modal connections and continuing to promote reinvestment into Downtown, the Riverfront, Lower Downtown and the area around CMU.
5. Strong Neighborhoods and Housing Choices. This Plan Principle promotes more opportunities that meet all community needs, partner with other housing providers in developing housing strategies, supporting investment in maintenance and amenities in existing neighborhoods, and fostering neighborhood development where people of all ages, incomes and backgrounds can live.

6. Efficient and Connected Transportation. This Plan Principle has goals that develop a safe, balanced and well-connected transportation system that has reliability, efficiency and safety. Other goals include the facilitating the movement of goods, encouraging transit, bicycling, walking and the need to plan for the future with emerging technologies and opportunities.

7. Great Places and Recreation Opportunities. This Plan Principle includes goals such as providing a safe and assessable network of parks, open spaces and trails, addressing equity of location of these, and maintaining access to public lands. Fostering opportunities to bring people together by developing great public spaces and supporting the arts and culture community are also addressed.

8. Resource Stewardship. This Plan Principle focuses on promoting water conservation, water quality, sustainable development and waste reduction practices, all goals of Resource Stewardship. Other goals include the need to refocus conservation and sustainability efforts, preserve unique assets, manage the City's urban forest and practicing water wise landscaping.

9. Quality Education and Facilities. This Plan Principle identifies goals such as supporting District 51 in high-quality and assessable education, adequate facilities and infrastructure and support Mesa County Libraries in community-based education.

10. Safe and Healthy Community. This Plan Principle includes providing excellence in public safety and emergency response, promoting access to health and wellness, fostering a culture of inclusiveness, respecting diversity, and promoting a safe and resilient community.

11. Effective and Transparent Government. This Plan Principle establishes goals for the City to align day-to-day decision making and budgeting within the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. It includes goals of providing opportunities for meaningful and inclusive community involvement, increasing the efficiency of City facilities, and upgrading the effectiveness of government programs and City services. Also, it includes the need for collaborating with local partners on mutual issues and developing and supporting leadership that reflects the diversity of the community.

Chapter 3: Land Use and Growth - This chapter illustrates and describes the type and location of future land uses within Grand Junction. The Plan utilizes a tiered growth approach meant to compliment the Land Use Map, a new feature that was not contemplated in the 2010 Plan, creating three tiers in a concentric pattern moving outward from the City center and an incentive area that will influence how the City continues to prioritize and annex new growth. The Land Use Map in Chapter 3—which replaces the 2010 Future Land Use Map is a familiar policy tool for the City. This Map along with Plan Principle 3, “Responsible and Managed Growth” in Chapter 2 and the “Area-Specific Policies” in Chapter 4 chart a course for balanced growth, promoting infill and redevelopment in the City's core as well as greenfield development on the City's edges. Chapter 3 also addresses target service levels for specific City services.

The following key factors are instrumental in informing the development of the plan's policy related to future growth.

Projected Population Growth – The State Demographer's population projections of an annual growth rate of 1.1% for the Urban Development Boundary means 24,000 additional people for a total of 124,000 by 2040. With the average household size at 2.2 persons per household, nearly 11,000 new dwelling units will be needed over the next 20 years.

Persigo 201 Service Area Boundary – The 1998 Persigo Agreement outlines requirements for annexation as a condition of development within the defined 201 boundary. Because of this agreement the City can expect nearly all of the growth in the Urban Development Boundary (UDB) will occur within the city limits.

Urban Development Boundary (UDB) – The 2010 Comp Plan established the UDB which under the Persigo Agreement is to align with the Persigo 201 boundary. The proposed 2020 Plan generally follows the 2010 UDB boundary with a few exceptions. Strategic adjustments were made to the UDB to better align the boundary with specific constraints, past Persigo 201 boundary decisions, and evolving policy related to greenfield development.

Housing Supply and Needs – Public input focused on the housing needs of the community and the lack of housing in certain price points. Comments also focused on concerns regarding those that are experiencing both acute and chronic homelessness. The Plan addresses housing, the need for it to be adequate, attainable and the need to address undersupply and housing type. It also addresses the need to collaborate on the topic of homelessness. This is particularly important as the community looks to build the projected 11,000 homes needed to be constructed through 2040 to accommodate expected growth.

Commercial and Employment Gaps and Needs – Public engagement in the planning process highlighted the need to ensure existing businesses can survive and grow and future business can start-up and thrive in a healthy environment. The Plan provides a Land Use Map identifying commercial and industrial areas which preserve existing business and employment areas and provide new areas for growth. In addition, a broad mixed-use land use category was created to allow for areas where both employment and housing can occur together providing neighborhoods access to goods and services, a reoccurring desire heard from many during public outreach.

Balanced Growth – The Plan envisions future growth will be both 1) infill and redevelopment and 2) greenfield development.

Intensification and Growth Tiers Map

The Intensification and Growth Tiers Map is intended to guide the City's long-term planning and reflect locational priorities for which the City should accommodate and

prioritize the future population. This starts with the intensification of the City's urban core, which allows the City to support the efficient use of existing public facilities and services by directing development to locations where it can be adequately served by existing public facilities and services such as water, sewer, police, transportation, schools, fire, stormwater management, and parks. Also, it allows the City to better align capital improvements and infrastructure investments with its financial resources and focus improvements in areas that already provide some level of urban service.

Growth in Grand Junction will continue to recognize the Urban Development Boundary as the area in which urban level development should occur and as such, this Comprehensive Plan focuses on urban intensification and three general tiers of development that fit within, and directly respond to, the established boundary. By adhering to the growth tiers for future development, the City will be well positioned to prepare for steady population growth, manage its existing land uses, and achieve its vision of responsible and managed growth.

The map identifies three tiers for future growth and acknowledges an area in which the city should continue to offer incentives for infill and redevelopment.

Tier 1: Urban Infill - Areas where urban services already exist and generally meet service levels, usually within existing City limits, where the focus is on intensifying residential and commercial areas through infill and redevelopment.

Tier 2: Suburban Infill - Areas within the existing UDB and 201 that are urban-izing or proximate to areas that are urbanizing. This Tier also includes areas that were mostly developed in unincorporated Mesa County and infrequently improved with urban infrastructure such as curb, gutter, sidewalks, and parks.

Tier 3: Outward Growth - Areas predominantly characterized as rural and larger acreage properties not currently served by urban infrastructure and that are prioritized to stay rural for the duration of the 20-year planning horizon to promote more focused development activity in Tier 1 and Tier 2.

Incentive Areas - Areas consistent with past City plans and in general include the Rail, River, Downtown, and University Districts as well as the North Avenue Corridor. The State Highway 50 corridor in Orchard Mesa is also included.

Land Use Map

Chapter 3 establishes the Land Use Map. The Map includes nine land use categories; a significant simplification from the 2010 Future Land Use Map that included 22 land use categories.

Each land use category provides the allowable range of density, specific characteristics of the land use category, primary and secondary land uses permitted, and the implementing zone districts for each land use category.

The Map provides three land use categories for residential land uses, keeping in mind that the densities should reflect those that are urban-level densities. These land use categories include Residential Low with densities of 2 to 5.5 dwelling units per acre; Residential Medium with densities of 5.5 to 12 dwelling units per acre; and Residential High with densities over 12 dwelling units per acre.

A highlight of the proposed 2020 Land Use Map as compared to the 2010 Land Use Map is the reduction of the number of categories; and identifying areas beyond the City's core, areas on the periphery or edges of the UDB that are shown as "Rural". The Map also provides for a Residential Rural designation. These areas are intended to remain rural (up to 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres) for the duration of the planning horizon thereby promoting more focused development activity in Tier 1 and Tier 2 where the other "urban" land use categories are and encourage growth in these two tiers. These Rural areas work in tandem with the Intensification and Growth Tiers Map to encourage these areas to remain rural for the foreseeable future.

Much was said by the public through the public engagement process for the need of the Plan to promote growth inward and limit growth and outward expansion of the City. To address this, a tool of this Plan establishes a minimum density of 2 dwelling units per acre. This is much different than the 2010 Comprehensive Plan that allows for residential estate development and densities as small as one dwelling unit per two acres. This minimum density tool establishes a much higher expected density for future rezones in the "Residential Low" land use category.

As the Community increases densities, the amount of land needed for growth decreases, reducing sprawl. Said in another way, if the City's next 5,000 single family homes were built in the R-1 and R-2 zone districts where the average gross density is close to one unit per acre, those homes and associated infrastructure (streets, open space, etc.) would cover 5,000 acres of land. Whereas, establishing a minimum urban density for new growth seeking a rezone for residential development is set at two dwelling units per acre, the same 5,000 homes would take up no more than 2,500 acres, reducing the amount of land or sprawl. The Plan does not propose to remove the Estate, R-1 and R-2 zone districts because they can't meet the new minimum density requirements. Existing areas of the City zoned either Residential Estate (RE), Residential -1 (R-1) and Residential - 2 (R-2) will remain and further development in those zone districts will be permitted. New rezones would adhere to the minimum density requirements established in this Plan.

Servicing Growth

Also found in Chapter 3 is a section on serving growth and looks at capacity requirements and level of service targets including domestic water, wastewater, flood control and drainage, transportation, police and fire protection, parks and recreation, other utilities (gas, electric, broadband, telecommunications), and public schools and libraries.

Chapter 4: Area-Specific Policies - While the Plan Principles and policies in Chapter 2

guide decision-making affecting the City as a whole, Area-Specific Policies in Chapter 4 guide the desired use, characteristics and form of development in specific locations within the City. This chapter outlines a vision and site-specific recommendations for two subareas: “Lower Downtown” and the “24 Road Corridor.” Highlights include a clear vision of Leach Creek as a linear park and centerpiece of a vibrant new 24 Road corridor, and deeper dives into “catalyst sites” providing concept level detail to show what could be developed.

This chapter also includes area-specific policies for the Commercial, Mixed Use, and Industrial land use categories. Design principles include Mix and Relationship of Uses, Circulation and Access, Building Form and Character, Streetscape, Parking and Service Entrances, Transportation Modes, and Relationship to Surrounding Areas.

Chapter 5: Implementation and Monitoring - This chapter calls for an implementation matrix to be crafted that provides the action items for the City as well as the designated roles and responsibilities of City departments and expected resources needed. The chapter also provides an overview of the process for creating updates and minor amendments to the plan. Lastly, the chapter calls for the City to regularly monitor the plan so as to reinforce the City’s steadfast commitment to making measurable progress in achieving the community’s vision.

Appendices

The appendices provide maps, graphics and information from the planning process, including a link to the Issues and Opportunities Report. The Appendices is divided into four sections:

Appendix A: Lists many reports and plans the City as completed that remain active and inform the Comprehensive Plan.

Appendix B: Includes many technical maps that inform the Plan. Maps include showing where there are problematic intersections, service areas for parks, broadband download speeds in the community, and a map showing where major grocers are located and where they are not.

Appendix C: A summary of the public process and outreach for the Comprehensive Plan.

Appendix D: List of potential funding sources and programs the City and community can tap into for future projects.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Discussion only

Attachments

None



Grand Junction City Council

Workshop Session

Item #1.b.

Meeting Date: June 30, 2025

Presented By: Ashley Chambers, Housing Manager, Tamra Allen, Community Development Director

Department: Community Development

Submitted By: Ashley Chambers, Housing Manager

Information

SUBJECT:

Overview of the Housing Needs Assessment, Strategy and Implementation Progress

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In response to a growing housing crisis, the City of Grand Junction completed a Housing Needs Assessment in 2021, identifying a significant shortfall in available housing. This led to the adoption of 13 housing strategies focused on expanding affordable housing, diversifying housing options, closing gaps between supply and demand, and supporting individuals experiencing homelessness. In 2024, the City reaffirmed its commitment by adopting an updated Housing Strategy (Resolution 74-24), which builds on prior accomplishments.

The Housing Division will provide an overview of current needs, progress on strategy implementation, and key housing and homelessness initiatives.

BACKGROUND OR DETAILED INFORMATION:

In 2019, Root Policy Research completed the Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment. In 2021, they collaborated with the City of Grand Junction staff and local stakeholders to draft the City's first Housing Strategy. This strategy originally included 12 strategies, with a 13th added in 2023. Ten of these strategies were prioritized for action within two years. Given the City's progress, the availability of new state and federal resources, and changing market conditions, the City re-engaged Root Policy to refresh housing data and provide a comprehensive update to the housing strategy.

On October 16, 2024, the City adopted Resolution 74-24, adopting the City of Grand Junction Housing Strategy Update 2024 which built upon the City's accomplishments and investments over the past 3 years, and is tailored to address identified needs through eleven key strategies.

Staff will provide an overview of affordable housing, review the housing data and present updates to the implementation and progress of eleven strategies.

FISCAL IMPACT:

For discussion only.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Discussion only.

Attachments

1. GJ Housing Strategy Update 2024
2. Housing - 2024 Annual Report
3. Housing - 2023 Annual Report



Root Policy Research

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Grand Junction Housing Strategy Update 2024

REPORT

September 24, 2024

GRAND JUNCTION HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE 2024

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PURPOSE

In 2021, Root Policy Research drafted Grand Junction's first citywide Housing Strategy, in collaboration with City staff and local stakeholders. Given the City's progress on housing strategies along with new state-level resources and shifting market conditions, the City contracted Root to lead an update to the Housing Strategy. The Update builds on the City's accomplishments and investments over the past 3 years, complements the recently completed Unhoused Strategy, and is tailored to address identified needs. The recommended strategies offer a balanced approach for promoting housing affordability and attainability within Grand Junction.

HOUSING AS A CITY PRIORITY

Grand Junction's Comprehensive Plan serves as a blueprint for the city, with its foundation resting on the community's vision for the future. The Housing Strategy Update integrates the priorities identified as most crucial by the City Council into the broader framework of city planning and development.

Comprehensive Plan Principle 5: Strong Neighborhoods and Housing Choices.

1. Promote more opportunities for housing choices that meet the needs of people of all ages, abilities, and incomes.
2. Partner in developing housing strategies for the community.
3. Support continued investment in and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and amenities in established neighborhoods.
4. Promote the integration of transportation mode choices into existing and new neighborhoods.
5. Foster the development of neighborhoods where people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds live together and share a feeling of community.

2023-2025 City Council Strategic Outcome: Welcoming, Livable, Engaging. Grand Junction fosters a sense of belonging, where people are accepted as themselves and have access to the amenities and services they need to thrive, and actively seeks participation from our community.

GRAND JUNCTION HOUSING VISION & GOAL

HOUSING VISION & PRODUCTION GOAL

The City of Grand Junction is committed to enacting housing policies and partnering with outside organizations that seek to increase affordable housing options, diversify housing choice, decrease the gap between need and housing inventory, and assist those without homes to access supportive and housing services.

The city's goal (as adopted in Resolution 48-22 and adjusted for Prop 123 alignment in Resolutions 64-23 and 65-23) is to:

Increase affordable housing stock by 3% per year.

Based on the current baseline, this goal equates to a 9% increase over 3 years (374 units) or approximately 125 units annually by December 31, 2026. The City formally committed to Prop 123 unit production goals in August 2023. For the year 2023, there were 44 new rental units, one new for sale unit, and five potential units counted toward the Prop 123 commitment (those built after August 2023). Due to being a partial year, all 2023 units will contribute to the 2024 unit production goals. As of September 2024, the City estimates that 69 completed units and 71 pending units will count toward the 2024 unit production goal.

DEFINING AFFORDABILITY

On August 2, 2023, the City Council adopted Resolution 65-23 which amended the City of Grand Junctions Housing Goal and the definitions for Affordable and Attainable Housing.

- **Affordable Housing** is defined as units that have a contractual requirement for an income restriction for affordability (housing costs are less than 30%) for thirty or more years.
 - Rental Units affordable to households at/below 60% AMI*
 - For-Sale/Homeownership units affordable to households at/below 100% AMI.
- **Attainable/Workforce Housing** is defined as:
 - Rental Units affordable to 80% - 100% AMI households
 - For-Sale/Homeownership units affordable to 100% - 140% AMI households.

***Area median income—or AMI:** Housing programs rely on income limits published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that are represented as percentages of the area median family income (commonly abbreviated as “HUD AMI” or simply “AMI”). AMI is defined annually by HUD market studies; it varies geographically and by household size. The figure on the following page shows 2024 AMI for the Grand Junction MSA (defined as Mesa County) in 2024; along with affordable rent and home prices.

GRAND JUNCTION HOUSING VISION & GOAL

Figure 1. 2024 Mesa County Area Median Income and Affordable Rents and Home Prices

			1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person	6 Person
Social Security Income (up to \$943/mo. or \$11,316/yr. for individual) CO Min. Wage (\$14.42/hr)	30% AMI	Income	\$19,800	\$22,620	\$25,440	\$28,260	\$30,540	\$32,790
		(hourly)	(\$9.52)	(\$10.88)	(\$12.23)	(\$13.59)	(\$14.68)	(\$15.76)
		Affordable Rent	\$495	\$566	\$636	\$707	\$764	\$820
		Affordable Home Price	\$65,262	\$74,557	\$83,852	\$93,147	\$100,662	\$108,078
Food service, Healthcare Assistance, Daycare Providers, Teacher's Aides	50% AMI	Income	\$33,000	\$37,700	\$42,400	\$47,100	\$50,900	\$54,650
		(hourly)	(\$15.87)	(\$18.13)	(\$20.38)	(\$22.64)	(\$24.47)	(\$26.27)
		Affordable Rent	\$825	\$943	\$1,060	\$1,178	\$1,273	\$1,366
		Affordable Home Price	\$108,770	\$124,261	\$139,753	\$155,244	\$167,769	\$180,130
Agriculture, Sales/Retail, EMTs	60% AMI	Income	\$39,600	\$45,240	\$50,880	\$56,520	\$61,080	\$65,580
		(hourly)	(\$19.04)	(\$21.75)	(\$24.46)	(\$27.17)	(\$29.37)	(\$31.53)
		Affordable Rent	\$990	\$1,131	\$1,272	\$1,413	\$1,527	\$1,640
		Affordable Home Price	\$130,524	\$149,114	\$167,703	\$186,293	\$201,323	\$216,156
Teachers, Social Services, Firefighters, Construction	80% AMI	Income	\$52,800	\$60,320	\$67,840	\$75,360	\$81,440	\$87,440
		(hourly)	(\$25.38)	(\$29.00)	(\$32.62)	(\$36.23)	(\$39.15)	(\$42.04)
		Affordable Rent	\$1,320	\$1,508	\$1,696	\$1,884	\$2,036	\$2,186
		Affordable Home Price	\$174,032	\$198,818	\$223,605	\$248,391	\$268,431	\$288,207
Nurses, Police Officers	100% AMI	Income	\$66,000	\$75,400	\$84,800	\$94,200	\$101,800	\$109,300
		Affordable Rent	\$1,650	\$1,885	\$2,120	\$2,355	\$2,545	\$2,733
		Affordable Home Price	\$217,540	\$248,523	\$279,506	\$310,489	\$335,539	\$360,259
Engineers, Legal, Management	120% AMI	Income	\$79,200	\$90,480	\$101,760	\$113,040	\$122,160	\$131,160
		Affordable Rent	\$1,980	\$2,262	\$2,544	\$2,826	\$3,054	\$3,279
		Affordable Home Price	\$261,048	\$298,227	\$335,407	\$372,586	\$402,647	\$432,311

Source: City of Grand Junction, Root Policy Research and HUD 2024 income limits.

TOP HOUSING NEEDS IN GRAND JUNCTION

MARKET TRENDS

Appendix A provides a data refresh on key housing metrics in Mesa County and the City of Grand Junction. Key findings are:

- At the median, renter income gains kept pace with rising rents; however, an affordability shortage persists for low income renters and vacancy rates are extremely low (3.1%)
- The rental market saw losses of units priced below \$800 per month and increases in units priced above \$1,500 per month. Newly constructed units rent at a premium—most around \$1,500 per month, or 80% AMI.
- The rental gaps analysis shows a rental affordability gap of 1,211 units priced below \$625 (affordable to households earning less than \$25,000). This is down from the 2019 gap of 2,168 units, primarily due to rising renter incomes. *(Note: Some sources suggest that current income data may be falsely inflated due to lingering impact of COVID stimulus packages).*
- After sharp increases into 2022; home prices are stabilizing; however, affordability (i.e., purchasing power) has dropped due to high interest rates. Forty-two percent of homes sold in 2021 were affordable to 80% AMI compared to just 9% in 2024.
- Similar to rentals, newly constructed homes sell at premium: 93% of Grand Junction homes constructed since 2021 were affordable only to households over 120% AMI.
- Cash purchases—signaling investor presence—are increasingly common at entry-level prices, particularly among products affordable to 50% AMI but also to 80% AMI.
- The for-sale gaps analysis shows a growing purchase affordability gap and an acute affordability mismatch impacting households earning up to \$75,000 per year, or 120% AMI (up from 80% AMI in 2019).

HOW HAVE HOUSING NEEDS CHANGED?

2021: Top Housing Needs

- **Additional affordable rentals** (or rental assistance), specifically for residents earning less than \$25,000 per year.
- **Starter homes and family homes priced near or below \$250,000.** Over the past decade, for-sale affordability and ownership rates have fallen.
- **Housing resources for special needs populations** including residents with accessibility/mobility needs, older adults, people experiencing homelessness, and low-income households.
- **Diverse housing options to accommodate evolving needs** of residents and a wider array of market preferences and special needs.

2024 Update

- ➡ • Gap is lower but need persists (acute rental need is <30% AMI)
- ➡ • Shortage impacting higher income households than in 2021 (exacerbated by interest rates)
- ➡ • Need persists; see UHNA for in depth analysis of needs among unhoused residents.
- ➡ • Need persists to accommodate demographic shifts and changes in housing preferences.

PROGRESS ON PREVIOUS HOUSING STRATEGIES

2021 HOUSING STRATEGY PROGRESS

The original Grand Junction Housing Strategy was formally adopted by City Council in 2021. It included twelve housing strategies for implementation to increase housing options, affordability, and increase access to services. In 2022, the City adopted a thirteenth housing strategy focused on community engagement and education. Since that time, the City has made significant strides toward improving housing affordability and delivery in Grand Junction, including the following highlights:

- **Creation of the Housing Division.** The Housing Division was launched in 2022 following the adoption of the City of Grand Junction Housing Strategy. The Housing Division has grown to three full-time staff and has been supported by other temporary employees.

- **Funding.** In the last two years, the City committed \$19 million to housing and houseless needs. This funding encompassed capital projects, operational support for service providers, emergency assistance during COVID, funding for housing and homeless projects, matching and securing grants for housing initiatives, and actively expanding the City's role in addressing housing and houselessness issues. (However, limited General Funds and a lack of dedicated revenue makes future funding uncertain).
- **Award recipient.** The City of Grand Junction's Housing Division received the 2023 Mary J. Nelson Inspirational Award from United Way of Mesa County for their outstanding work in implementation of housing initiatives and community education efforts.

The figure below shows each 2021 strategy with current updates on accomplishments and progress.

Figure 2. Progress on Previous (2021) Housing Strategies

2021 Strategy		Progress Update 2024
1	Participate in regional collaboration regarding housing/homelessness needs and services.	Ongoing - Monthly meetings with housing and service providers; - County-wide collaborative for the unhoused
2	Adopt a local affordable housing goal(s).	Adopted City Goal: To Increase affordable housing stock by 9% over three years (374 units) or approximately 125 units annually by December 31, 2026.
3	Implement land use code changes that facilitate attainable housing development and housing diversity.	Adopted & Ongoing City adopted new ZDC in December 2023. Included: - increased range of allowed housing types; - incorporate higher levels of bike and ped connectivity; - revised standards to increase flexibility in design, setback, and buildable area; - decreased parking requirements for residential uses and affordable development City adopted ZDC changes to allow zoning for interim housing and shelter solutions in support of Unhoused Strategies in Aug. 2024; effective late Sept. 2024

PROGRESS ON PREVIOUS HOUSING STRATEGIES

2021 Strategy		Progress Update 2024
4	Encourage development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs).	Ongoing Created ADU Production Program (funded at \$250,000) to incentivize and support ADUs (19 ADUs were approved for funding January-July 2024).
5	Formalize existing incentives and consider additional incentives for affordable housing development.	Adopted The Affordable Housing Incentive program was adopted in July 2024 and includes fee waivers of up to 100% for units affordable at 100% AMI (for sale)/60% AMI (for rent). City adopted an expedited review process for projects that include 10% of units affordable at 80% AMI (for sale) or 60% AMI (for rent) in December 2022.
6	Allocate city owned land (and/or strategically acquire vacant or underutilized properties) for affordable and mixed-income housing.	Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Passed Ballot Measure 2b to modify lease terms for using city land for affordable/workforce housing; - In process of acquiring 21 acres for affordable development (\$1MM from City; \$2.2MM from CHFA); - Supported GJHA 15 acre parcel purchase (with \$750k City funds)
7	Create a dedicated revenue source to address housing challenges.	Ongoing Over the past two years leading into 2024, the City committed \$19 million in housing/unhoused funding, which includes \$4.45 million in awarded grants--this investment leveraged over \$43 million from partners (for a total housing investment of \$62 million). However, funding is still discretionary, not dedicated (failed to pass dedicated lodging tax and STR tax).
8	Provide financial support to existing housing and homelessness services and promote resident access to services.	Ongoing City funding and ARPA funding to a wide range of services related to housing and homelessness. Even so, need for services exceeds available resources.
9	Support acquisition/ rehabilitation that creates or preserves affordable housing.	Ongoing Launched Land and Building Acquisition Program and applied for PRO Housing Grant Funding but was not awarded and program remains unfunded.
10	Consider implementation of an inclusionary housing/linkage fee ordinance.	Ongoing Nexus study to inform linkage discussion is underway.
11	Explore designation of an Urban Renewal Areas (URA) and utilization of Tax Increment Financing for affordable housing.	No update Recommended timeline for implementation is 4-6 years; no update at this time.
12	Consider adoption of a voluntary rental registry program in conjunction with landlord incentives.	Adopted Launched At Home in GJ Landlord and Tenant Program in 2024, which includes a voluntary rental registry, landlord incentives, and tenant education workshops which continue in 2024.
13	Provide community engagement and education opportunities to address housing challenges and promote community participation	Ongoing City staff continue to provide education/engagement opportunities, including the following efforts in 2023: Housing Book Club; New Dimensions Class (Home for All); panel discussions and events; engagement in Unhoused Strategy, Poverty Immersion Experience (by United Way).

Source: City of Grand Junction and Root Policy Research.

PROGRESS ON PREVIOUS HOUSING STRATEGIES

UNHOUSED STRATEGIES

In addition to the progress summarized above, the City has also adopted strategies “to fill key gaps and address significant needs of people experiencing houselessness (PEH) in the Grand Junction area in support of reaching the community goal of functional zero.”

The Grand Junction Area Unhoused Strategy identifies the following recommendations:

1. Establish a community-wide framework for enhancing Coordinated Entry and System of Care Processes.
2. Establish a flexible city-county housing fund to support housing security and increase coordination between services and collaboration among service providers.
3. Increase access to prevention, diversion, and housing navigation services.
4. Expand accessibility to basic needs and hygiene.
5. Expand mental health care services and substance use treatment options for PEH.
6. Increase accessibility and expand transportation services for PEH.
7. Increase non-market housing options including interim housing and shelter units.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

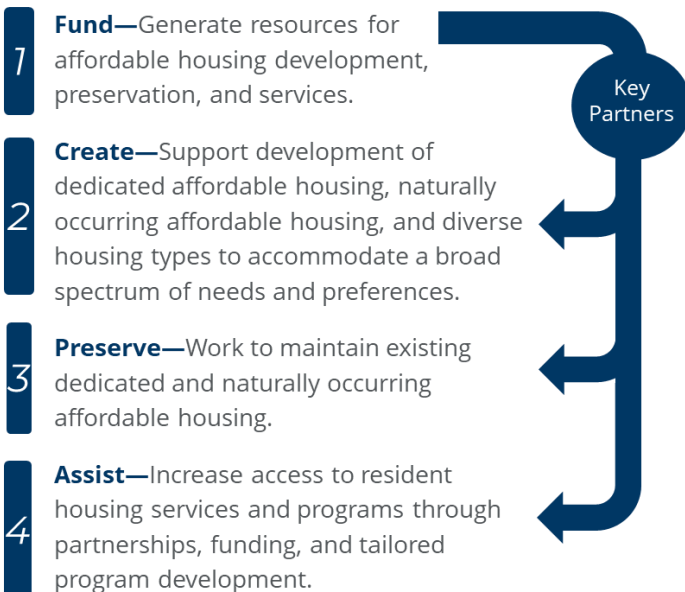
As part of the existing housing strategy review, Root surveyed local housing stakeholders including non-profit service providers, market-rate and affordable housing developers, and real estate professionals about their perception of housing needs, strategies, and priorities. Stakeholders were also invited to provide feedback on the 2024 draft strategies at three community meetings held in early September. Feedback from the survey and community meetings are incorporated into the 2024 Housing Strategy Updates. An analysis of survey responses is included in Appendix B.

2024 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATES

STRATEGY FRAMEWORK?

There is no single strategy—or “silver bullet”—to resolve a community’s housing challenges. Instead, it is important to have a toolkit of strategies to effectively address needs and respond to changing market and policy conditions.

An integrated approach that creates funding and leverages key partners (e.g., service providers, PHAs, affordable developers, etc.) to create and preserve affordability as well as assist low- and moderate-income households will have the most success.



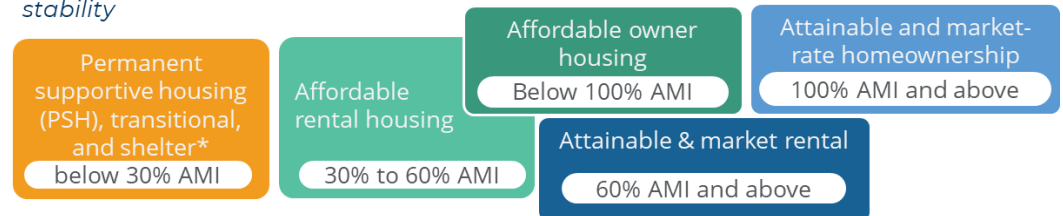
Strategies across the continuum...

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE NEEDED

subsidies, incentives, and policies to create/preserve income-qualified units; and programs to improve housing stability

THE MARKET AS A PARTNER

land use and zoning tools to unlock supply and improve natural affordability



Incomes and housing options

**shelter is not a “housing” solution but a temporary step toward housing graphic adapted from CHFA’s Housing Continuum*

The graphic above shows the full spectrum of housing from transitional/shelter housing up through market-rate homeownership. Not surprisingly, the farther up the income/price spectrum, the more likely it is that the private market can provide housing without subsidy or intervention from public entities. However, at the most affordable end (housing below 30% AMI), deep subsidies are needed to produce and operate housing.

The City can leverage the market to develop needed housing at the upper end by using land use tools to unlock supply and increase natural affordability. (Zoning policies manage the type, volume, and location of housing that can be constructed, which directly impacts product and price-point diversity).

Even with adequate zoning, the private market cannot produce affordable housing for lower income households due to the high cost of new construction, land, and financing. Therefore, direct subsidies (e.g., gap financing, LIHTC, land donations, etc.) are needed to create affordable rental housing and to create access to homeownership for low- and moderate-income households.

2024 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATES

IMPLEMENTATION

Since the adoption of the Housing Strategy, the City has created an effective infrastructure for implementation of housing priorities, primarily through the allocation of resources to support housing efforts including staff, funding, and programs.

A crucial asset to the City in addressing ongoing needs is its strong network of service providers and housing-related non-profits, including the Grand Junction Housing Authority. Key providers and their primary housing programs are shown in the figure at right.

Effective implementation going forward will include:

- Continued City staff support;
- Regional coordination and partnerships;
- Transparent progress tracking of housing goals and monitoring individual program outcomes; and
- Consistent/predictable funding.

The City reports on these items to City Council through workshops, memoranda, and the Annual Housing Report.

Figure 3. Strategic Housing Partners

Organization	Housing Programs/Services
Grand Junction Housing Authority	Affordable rental housing construction/property management, Housing Choice Voucher (and other voucher programs) administration, transitional housing program for homeless families with school-children, homeownership education and counseling, housing advocate and family stability program, family self-sufficiency program.
Housing Resources of Western Colorado	Affordable rental housing, housing counseling, homebuyer education, housing rehabilitation loan program, weatherization assistance program, and Self-Help Build Housing program (supports affordable home ownership construction).
Grand Valley Catholic Outreach	Permanent supportive housing, transitional supportive housing, rapid rehousing, utility assistance (one-time financial aid for qualifying households), day center for people experiencing homelessness, and affordable housing search assistance.
Homeward Bound of the Grand Valley	Year-round homeless shelter and services for people experiencing homelessness.
Karis, Inc.	Shelter, housing, and services for individuals experiencing homelessness, primarily youth.
Hilltop Community Resources	Provides a wide range of human services. Housing specific programs include shelter for victims of domestic violence and transitional housing and case management to youth transitioning from the foster care system.
Habitat for Humanity of Mesa County	Affordable homeownership construction and non-profit home improvement stores and donation centers.
For-Profit Housing Developers	Contribute market-rate units thereby addressing overall supply shortages, increasingly willing to partner for future affordable development (this includes for-profit developers that contribute affordable units utilizing LHTC and PAB financing tools).

Source: City of Grand Junction and Root Policy Research.

2024 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATES

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

The following recommendations are designed to provide a balance approach to helping the City achieve its affordable goal and address identified housing needs; they were developed in conjunction with Grand Junction City Council, City staff, and input from Grand Junction Area housing stakeholders. **Many of the strategies reflect a continuation of previous strategies or minor modifications to previous strategies; however, the action items within each strategy build on previous accomplishments and introduce new approaches to delivering outcomes.** (Note that the 2021 strategies of regional coordination and goal setting no longer appear as strategies, but instead are reflected in the preceding discussion as critical components of implementation rather than stand-alone strategies. The previous ADU strategy is now embedded in Strategy 10 as it shifts into program monitoring rather than a new effort. Tracking progress on the City's goal is also included in Strategy 10).

Figure 4 summarizes the recommendations and action items; detailed descriptions follow the figure. The figure includes a proposed timeline for each Strategy, though individual action plans may have accelerated or delayed timeframes relative to strategy overall.

Figure 4. Recommended Strategies and Action Items

2024 Strategy and Action Items		Timeline
1	Continue to implement land use code changes that facilitate attainable housing development and housing diversity.	1-2 years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement state-mandated changes to occupancy limits (HB24-1007).• Evaluate process improvements and timeframes to help streamline development approvals.• Evaluate additional code changes to allow for innovative practices in zoning (e.g., parking reductions, minimum lot sizes, etc.) to encourage increased affordability and diversity of housing product.• Continue to work across City departments to evaluate how decisions in other areas may impact affordability of existing housing stock and development (e.g., transportation infrastructure, development fees for parks, fire, etc.).	
2	Explore new incentives for affordable and/or attainable housing development.	1-2 years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate the City's current practice of back-filling fee exemptions for exempt entities (GJHA).• Consider meaningful density bonuses (and/or lot size reductions) for both multi-family and single-family affordable projects.• If/as funding allows, contribute to infrastructure costs for sites with planned affordable construction.• Explore the potential of offering non-cash incentives for attainable housing that does not meet the city's definition of affordability.	

2024 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to fund ADU Production Program and Affordable Housing Production Incentive • Explore the creation of pre-approved plans for ADUs, townhomes, and duplexes to facilitate production of these product types. 	
3 Leverage city owned land and/or strategically acquire land for affordable and mixed-income housing.	1-2 years; ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City's top priority within this strategy is to focus on the delivery of affordable housing on any city-owned or acquired land. Deliver outcomes that serve the greatest housing needs (<60% AMI and <100% AMI owner); include mixed-income units while prioritizing both affordable rental and affordable homeownership opportunities; leverage efficiencies in both land use (appropriate density) and construction (e.g., modular); and incremental infrastructure development. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to maintain an inventory of existing public land that could be suitable for affordable/attainable housing. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain partnerships with local and regional affordable developers. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to evaluate strategic acquisitions as opportunities arise. 	
4 Create a dedicated revenue source to address housing challenges.	1-2 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the extent feasible, continue to appropriate General Funds in the short-term. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Housing Fund—a separate fund for transfer of General Fund allocations, grants, or other dedicated housing funding. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a working group to evaluate the potential for sustainable, dedicated local funding. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider testing voter support of small sales tax, excise tax, or property tax. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to evaluate the cost of other prioritized housing strategies to determine ongoing needs for funding. 	
5 Continue / expand funding for existing housing and homelessness services.	2-4 years; ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue existing program funding (federal, state, and local funds) and look for opportunities to maximize impact. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage Private Activity Bonds (PAB) to increase LIHTC capacity by pursuing 4% non-competitive LIHTC projects (through partnerships). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor new state and federal resources. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support local partners in securing funding from state, federal, and foundation sources. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain consistent communication with local service providers to identify critical needs that are underfunded and work to fill service gaps. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to fund services in support of the Unhoused Strategy recommendations. 	
6 Support preservation of existing housing that serves low- and moderate-income households.	4-6 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a database of the City's income restricted housing properties to help City staff identify opportunities for preservation programs. 	

2024 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATES

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain partnerships with local non-profits, housing providers, affordable developers, and other entities who could be able to acquire expiring income-restricted or NOAH properties and units. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As opportunities arise, dedicate local funds to support resident ownership of manufactured housing communities and/or non-profit or PHA acquisition/rehabilitation that renews affordability contracts or preserves NOAH. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore a local program to incentivize residents to deed restrict their properties to help maintain affordability in the community for future generations. 	
7	Evaluate inclusionary housing and/or a linkage fee ordinance.	1-2 years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete linkage fee currently underway while concurrently evaluating its impact on housing affordability and overall community goals related to economic development 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor inclusionary and linkage fee programs implemented to better understand the outcomes and lessons learned from their programs. 	
8	Explore designation of Urban Renewal Areas and Tax Increment Financing for affordable housing.	2-4 years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene task force to evaluate the viability of URA designation and TIF priorities in specific geographic areas that may benefit from housing and revitalization such as along North Avenue. 	
9	Provide community engagement and education opportunities to address housing challenges and promote community participation.	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to create opportunities for community engagement and education regarding housing issues. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider convening a regular ad-hoc group of housing professionals (e.g., financial, builders, developers, planners, etc.) to discuss housing issues and solutions. 	
10	Support legislative efforts at the state level to improve housing outcomes.	1-2 Years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote state exploration of single-stair access codes. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support construction defects reform to improve market feasibility of attached ownership products. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform mitigation of damages from methamphetamine and CDPHE clean-up standards. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for transitional housing to be included in unit counts toward the City's Prop 123 goal. 	
11	Monitor goal progress and housing program outcomes	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor the City's affordable housing production—and its progress toward Prop 123 goals—as well as program outcomes for all housing programs, including the ADU Production Program and At Home in GJ Landlord and Tenant Program. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure transparent tracking of progress and regular (annual) reporting to City Council and the community. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As needed, modify programs to improve outcomes and/or create new programs to address evolving needs. 	

Source: Root Policy Research.

2024 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATES

STRATEGY 1. CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT LAND USE CODE CHANGES THAT FACILITATE ATTAINABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING DIVERSITY.

Land use and zoning regulations that provide flexibility, clarity, and incentives for residential development are essential for promoting the development of affordable housing. Zoning regulations that negatively impact residential development affordability include restrictions such as minimum house and/or lot sizes, limited land zoned for moderate density (missing middle) options and/or multifamily, prohibitions on accessory dwelling units, and prohibitions on manufactured housing.

In December of 2023, the City adopted updates to its Zoning and Development Code (ZDC) to better reflect the key principles and policies described in the 2020 One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan, including changes that created opportunity for affordable and attainable housing, consistent with recommendations in the previous Housing Strategy. In August 2024, the City adopted additional changes to allow zoning for interim housing in support of Unhoused Strategies.

Continuing this strategy into future years serves as a reminder to consistently review the ZDC for opportunities to unlock

supply and allow the production of naturally affordable/attainable housing products.

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

- Implement state-mandated changes to occupancy limits (HB24-1007).
- Evaluate process improvements and timeframes to help streamline development approvals.
- Evaluate additional code changes to allow for innovative practices in zoning to encourage affordability and diversity of housing product. Potential reforms to track include single-exit stairways on multifamily (which failed in a statewide measure but is being considered by several local jurisdictions)¹, relaxed parking and lot size requirements, flexibility in setbacks (especially for infill) as well as any new recommendations that come from the Colorado Housing Affordability Project or the Housing Accelerator Playbook, as authored by APA and NLC.²
- Continue to work across City departments to evaluate how decisions in other areas may impact affordability of new development—and/or cost of living in general (e.g., transportation infrastructures, development fees related to parks, fire, public works, etc.)

¹See <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb24-1239> for the state bill; see <https://www.centerforbuilding.org/singlestair-tracker> for more info on efforts nationwide.

² Much of the existing CHAP platform and the Accelerator Playbook have been adopted. Track new recommendations here: cohousingaffordabilityproject.org/ and www.planning.org/publications/document/9289884/

2024 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATES

STRATEGY 2. EXPLORE NEW INCENTIVES FOR AFFORDABLE AND/OR ATTAINABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

Development incentives to encourage developers/builders to build affordable housing can take many forms:

- Permit or process-oriented incentives (e.g., expedited review for affordable developments as adopted by the City in 2022; city-assigned, dedicated planning advocate to help move the development through the approval process);
- Regulatory incentives such as density bonuses or lot size reductions (allows for more units to be built than allowed by right);
- Fee waivers/rebates (Colorado state law and the City of Grand Junction allow impact fees to be waived for affordable housing); and
- Tax incentives for affordable development (or land donation to affordable development).

Development incentives are tied to a contractual commitment to produce an agreed-upon share of affordable units (can be rental or owner-occupied). When well structured, incentives can be relatively high impact (generate a moderate number of units) for very little cost to the city.

Grand Junction already has a policy to pay fees on behalf of projects (contingent on funding) for affordable units and has created a fast-track review protocol for affordable developments in compliance with State Proposition 123. Even so, there are opportunities to better leverage existing incentives

and evaluate new incentives, as outlined in the recommended actions below.

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

- Evaluate the City's current practice of back-filling fee waivers for exempt agencies (GJHA). Currently, the city waives fees for affordable units, but covers the cost of those fees by backfilling from the city's housing funds. While this practice does help support the intent of fees, it also requires meaningful funding that could be prioritized to leverage additional affordable unit production or housing services instead. In 2024, one affordable multifamily unit carries fees of \$11,880—\$5,349 in impact fees for transportation, parks, fire, police, and open space, and \$6,531 in water, sewer, and tap fees. Fees for one affordable single family unit include \$6,615 in impact fees and \$11,054 in water, sewer, and tap fees for a total of \$17,669.
- Consider meaningful density bonuses for both multi-family and single-family affordable projects including (but not limited to) lot size reductions, additional dwelling units per acre, height bonuses, and/or incremental zoning (allowing the next increment of density by right). Note that density bonuses for single family are most effective when they override minimum lots size or width restrictions and offer flexibility on setbacks.
- If/as funding allows, offset (in full or part) infrastructure costs for sites with planned affordable construction. Contributing to and completing the infrastructure not only serves as a gap-fill to lower the cost of development, but it has the added benefit of timing, because the infrastructure

2024 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATES

costs are subsidized—and the work completed—up front, it shortens the building timeline for affordable developers and lowers their financing costs.

- Explore the potential of offering non-cash incentives for attainable housing that does not meet the city's definition of affordability. Some communities offer a tiered incentive program in which light incentives (typically process or land use incentives but not financial subsidies) are extended to attainable or missing middle developments.
- Continue to fund ADU Production Program and Affordable Housing Production Incentive.
- Explore the option of creating pre-approved plans for ADUs, townhomes, and duplexes to facilitate production of these “missing middle” products.

STRATEGY 3. LEVERAGE CITY OWNED LAND (AND/OR STRATEGICALLY ACQUIRE PROPERTIES) FOR AFFORDABLE AND MIXED-INCOME HOUSING.

Property acquisition costs, especially in developed areas of the city, is a major component of the cost of developing affordable housing. It is increasingly common for local governments to donate, discount, or lease vacant land or underutilized properties (e.g., closed schools, vacant or out-of-date public sector offices) for use as residential mixed-income or mixed-use developments. Some properties are acquired after businesses have been closed for illegal use or very delinquent taxes.

These properties are held in a “land bank” by the City and eventually redeveloped by nonprofit or private developers through a proposal process. Land banks vary in forms from single parcels to multiple, scattered site properties, to large tracts of land. The land can be donated, discounted, or offered on a land lease to the selected developer who agrees to a specified affordability level or community benefit. A good starting point in this process for any community is creating an inventory of existing public land that could be used for housing sites in the future.

The city and other public agencies, such as Mesa County and the school district (D51), own properties which could potentially reduce costs and facilitate development of affordable housing. While much of this property is either already utilized for public facilities or is inappropriate for residential development, there may be opportunities to leverage additional affordable and mixed-income housing through better utilization of publicly owned property.

Since this strategy was adopted in the original Housing Strategy, the City has made significant progress including:

- Passing ballot measure 2b which removed some barriers to leasing public land for affordable housing;
- Starting the acquisition process for a strategic 21.45 acre parcel for affordable development with funding support (\$2.2 million) from CHFA's Land Banking Program and a \$1 million match from the City's General Fund; and

2024 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATES

- Assisting the Grand Junction Housing Authority with the purchase of a 15-acre property to support the development of approximately 300 affordable rental units (\$750,000 in City funds and \$2.25 million in grant funding).

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

- The City's top priority within this strategy is to focus on the delivery of affordable housing on any city-owned or acquired land. In shepherding this project, the City should consider the following:
 - Delivering outcomes that serve the greatest housing needs and satisfy Prop 123 goals for rental units below 60% AMI and for-sale units below 100% AMI.
 - Prioritize and maximize projects utilizing funding that contributes to the Prop 123 unit production goals including those that allow for higher income levels (Equity program, etc.).
 - Delivering mixed-income units while prioritizing both affordable rental and affordable homeownership opportunities.
 - Leveraging efficiencies in both land use (appropriate density) and construction. This could include exploring the option for modular construction on site.
 - Incremental development of infrastructure to increase overall affordability and support development of a thriving neighborhood.
- Continue to maintain an inventory of existing land (including land owned by the City, the County, the school district, and others), work towards using city owned land identified to deliver units in the community, and evaluate feasibility for residential development.
- Maintain partnerships with local and regional affordable developers who may be able to develop the land into affordable rental or ownership units and explore potential public private partnership opportunities.
- Though the current priority for the City is development of current land assets for affordable development, the City should continue to evaluate strategic acquisitions as opportunities arise, prioritizing infill sites with access to services. This could include vacant land, underutilized/vacant commercial, and/or small naturally occurring affordable multifamily housing.

STRATEGY 4. CREATE A DEDICATED REVENUE SOURCE TO ADDRESS HOUSING CHALLENGES.

Dedicated local funds for affordable housing production, preservation, and programs (or a "Housing Trust Fund") can have a high impact on housing needs, especially in cities with adopted housing plans, clear and measurable housing goals, and/or additional development capacity. Revenue from local sources vary widely but can include General Obligation Bonds, commercial and/or residential linkage fees, sales tax, property tax, general fund allocations, set-aside or cash-in-lieu from inclusionary housing ordinances, and other taxes directly tied to housing demand.

2024 HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATES

Local funds are particularly effective for affordable housing development projects because they provide a sustainable and flexible funding source without federal or state regulations. Fee revenue can be used for gap financing of low-income housing projects, land banking, development incentives or subsidies (such as fee or tax rebates), and/or leveraging state and federal funding that requires a local match.

Dedicated funds—as opposed to discretionary allocations—have the added benefit of dependable future revenue, which is stable and allows a City to bond against the revenue, which can support up-front costs of major housing investments. Grand Junction has supported housing investments through General Fund allocations and one-time ARPA funding, but a sustainable, dedicated source would provide reliability and consistency for future investments.

The biggest challenge for most communities in creating a dedicated funding source is lack of political support for meaningful sources, especially in Colorado where all taxes require approval by the taxpayers. For example, the City of Grand Junction did attempt to pass a lodging tax increase and an STR tax for affordable housing but neither measure passed.

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

- Continue to appropriate General Funds in the short-term for implementation of the Housing Strategic Plan.
- Create a Housing Fund—a separate fund for transfer of General Fund allocations, grants, or other dedicated housing funding, which would separate funds designated

for housing (and related services) and prevent reallocations of unspent funds.

- Establish a working group or task force to evaluate the potential for sustainable, dedicated local funding and determine the most appropriate source of funds. As part of this effort, interview other cities/counties that have a dedicated housing funding source.
- Consider testing voter support of small sales tax or property tax (either on all properties or exclusively on high-value properties).
- Evaluate the cost of other prioritized housing strategies and/or related capital items to quantify ongoing needs for funding.

STRATEGY 5. CONTINUE / EXPAND FUNDING FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES.

As outlined in detail in the City's 2023 Annual Housing Report, the City is actively supporting housing and homelessness services through local and federal funds. In addition, the City has worked hard to increase resident awareness of programs through ongoing community engagement and improved web presence, including contact info for referrals to services, a list of community resources, and an interactive online Community Resource Map.

Despite this support, the need for services exceeds the current resources available. Stakeholders specifically highlighted a

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need for case management and resource navigators, supportive services (paired with housing), and an increase in rent subsidies or housing vouchers.

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

- Continue existing program funding (federal, state, and local funds) and look for opportunities to maximize impact.
- Regularly evaluate expenditures (including CDBG and local funds) to ensure alignment with articulated goals. Consider developing specific outcomes and key metrics for local services to ensure efficacy in use of funding.
- Leverage Private Activity Bonds (PAB) to increase LIHTC capacity by pursuing 4% non-competitive LIHTC projects in partnership with the local housing authority, non-profits, or LIHTC developers. Note that some communities assess fees when directly issuing PAB to developers, the revenue from which can also be allocated to affordable housing and services.
- Continue to monitor new state and federal resources, including Proposition 123 programs and ADU funding (created by HB24-1152).
- Support local partners in securing funding from state, federal, and foundation sources through grant-writing and application support, information sharing, etc.
- Maintain consistent communication with local service providers to identify critical needs that are underfunded and work to fill service gaps.
- Continue to fund services in support of the Unhoused Strategy recommendations.

STRATEGY 6. SUPPORT PRESERVATION OF EXISTING HOUSING THAT SERVES LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.

There are two different submarkets of properties serving low- and moderate-income households: income-restricted properties and naturally occurring affordable housing, or NOAH. Preservation efforts are needed when the affordability contracts on income-restricted units are set to expire and when NOAH is under market pressure to raise rents beyond what low-income households can afford.

Preservation is an attractive strategy because it utilizes existing housing stock and is not bound by the timeline and cost of new construction. However, preservation of NOAH, in particular, can be a challenge because it is driven by market opportunities and owned by private landlords—in other words, the City has no control over the rents.

Expiring affordability contracts. The most common form of preservation for expiring subsidies is to provide funding to non-profits for acquisition (and rehabilitation if needed) of the properties in exchange for long-term affordability. Financial resources can be allocated for activities including the identification of expiring properties, outreach and education, and/or funds to incentivize participation.

Naturally occurring affordable housing. NOAH refers to housing that does not have any income restriction but generally serves lower- and middle-income households through “naturally” affordable rents and home prices. It typically reflects

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older apartments, smaller and attached for-sale homes, and/or manufactured housing (i.e., mobile homes). This critical segment of the market constitutes a large portion of the housing stock but can be challenging to preserve through policy tools because it is fully market-driven. NOAH preservation strategies are typically designed to incentivize property owners to institute long-term affordability periods by providing financial assistance to make needed improvements to their units and properties.

Mobile/manufactured homes as a form of NOAH. Mobile or manufactured home communities (MHPs) are a unique form of NOAH as they offer an affordable option but also come with unique vulnerabilities tied to owning the structure but renting the lot on which it stands. Preservation efforts for this housing type typically include preserving the existence of MHPs through zoning protection, preserve affordability within MHPs (through infrastructure improvement grants/loans and services), and mitigating displacement of residents by supporting resident ownership in the face of redevelopment pressures.

The State of Colorado recently passed legislation (B24-1175) that facilitates preservation by establishing a local government right of first refusal on existing/expiring income restricted housing and a right of first offer on aging multifamily that is 20 years or older and between 5 and 100 units (i.e., NOAH).

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

- Maintain a database of the City's income restricted housing properties including affordability periods, expiration

timelines, ownership entities, and other data to help City staff identify opportunities for preservation programs.

- Maintain partnerships with local non-profits, housing providers, affordable developers, and other entities who could be able to acquire expiring income-restricted or NOAH properties and units.
- As opportunities arise, dedicate local funds to support resident ownership of manufactured housing communities and/or non-profit or PHA acquisition/rehabilitation that renews affordability contracts or preserves NOAH.
- Explore a local program to incentivize residents to deed restrict their properties to help maintain affordability in the community for future generations.

STRATEGY 7. EVALUATE INCLUSIONARY HOUSING AND/OR A LINKAGE FEE ORDINANCE.

The primary policy tools used to mandate affordable housing production in conjunction with new development are:

1. Mandatory inclusionary housing policies, which require affordable production (or fees-in-lieu) in conjunction with new residential development (note that these policies can include incentives/offsets for compliance); and
2. Affordable housing linkage fees, which mandate an impact fee on new development (residential, commercial, or both) in proportion to its impact on affordable housing needs.

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Inclusionary ordinances are growing in popularity following state legislation that enables these policies to apply to both rental and for-sale developments. When structured well, inclusionary zoning can generate a substantial number of units at no direct cost to the city (other than enforcement and other administrative costs). Inclusionary programs can include “off-sets” and/or incentives for affordable housing provision, as well as a fee “in lieu” option for developers. Cities that allow developers to pay fees-in-lieu of developing income-restricted units typically allocate revenue generated from the fees to future affordable housing projects, but this is a challenging strategy to maintain, given the high costs of land and development.

Affordable housing linkage fees—similar to other impact fees—are tied to quantifiable impacts of new development. Implementation requires a nexus study to determine such impacts before setting fees. Revenues from linkage fees must be spent on affordable housing investments. A nexus study for affordable housing linkage fees in Grand Junction is already underway, as part of a broader impact fee update in the City. Results are expected in late 2024 and will contribute to future conversations on linkage fees.

Since both inclusionary policies and linkage fees apply exclusively to new development, they are most effective in markets that are actively developing new housing and/or commercial space and expect continued growth.

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

- Complete linkage fee currently underway while concurrently evaluating its impact on housing affordability and overall community goals related to economic development.
- Monitor inclusionary housing and linkage fee programs implemented to better understand the outcomes and lessons learned from their programs.

STRATEGY 8. EXPLORE DESIGNATION OF AN URBAN RENEWAL AREAS AND TAX INCREMENT FINANCING FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

An Urban Renewal Area (URA) is a statutory body created to prevent or eliminate blight in a targeted area of a community. A URA provides an opportunity for communities to target investment, public improvements and new development and unlocks a unique financing mechanism called Tax Increment Financing, or TIF.

TIF allows the URA to bond against the net new tax revenues—or the tax increment—that will be generated by redevelopment to fund up-front costs of that redevelopment. All or a portion of the tax increment can be set aside for affordable housing preservation and production. This strategy can generate affordable units or provide funding for incentives in new units within targeted areas. However, a URA can be cumbersome, expensive and time-intensive to establish and manage; and use of TIF for affordable housing can impact the total TIF package

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as property tax revenue on affordable developments may be low.

Broadly, TIF as an affordable housing tool has the ability to generate a modest volume of affordable units and works best when affordable housing is paired with uses that generate higher future tax revenue (e.g., retail).

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

Convene task force to evaluate the viability of URA designation and TIF priorities in specific geographic areas that may benefit from housing and revitalization, such as along North Avenue. Interview other communities where this approach is used to evaluate how it could apply in Grand Junction, such as Colorado Springs, Fort Collins, Loveland, and Denver—all of which use TIF to help finance affordable housing in designated URAs.

STRATEGY 9. PROVIDE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS HOUSING CHALLENGES AND PROMOTE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION.

Housing issues and solutions are often complex, technical topics. Community engagement and education is essential to ensure that:

- The community understands and is informed on housing-related initiatives that might affect their daily lives; and
- Community housing needs are accurately identified, so that these needs can be addressed and prioritized by the City.

Formalizing and adopting a housing-specific community engagement and education strategy helps City leaders clearly communicate the City's housing strategies, bring all relevant stakeholders into the City's housing policy-making processes, and create equitable housing solutions that have the support of the community.

Throughout 2023, City staff participated in the following efforts:

- Housing Book Club - In partnership with Mesa County Libraries, City Staff launched three book clubs, attracting approximately 60 participants. Featured book titles included, "Fixer Upper" by Jenny Schuetz, "Homelessness is a Housing Problem" by Coburn and Aldern, "Evicted" by Matthew Desmond.
- New Dimensions Class - Staff co-taught "Home for All: A Conversation about Housing in the Grand Valley" with the participation of 80 individuals over two sessions.
- Staff served as panel participants at events such as Community Impact Council's State of the Community Event and GJEP Economic Summit.
- By invitation, staff spoke to numerous at local clubs, service organizations, community groups, churches, and schools about housing.

In addition, United Way of Mesa County, The City of Grand Junction, and several service partners collaborated together to create a community-based education workshop and immersive experience to help raise awareness, inspire solutions, and help solve the issue of homelessness. The United to Solve Homelessness Campaign has hosted two workshops on

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homelessness and six Poverty Immersion Experiences. These events hosted more than 400 community members.

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

- Continue to create opportunities for community engagement and education regarding housing issues.
- Consider convening a regular ad-hoc group of housing professional (e.g., financial, builders, developers, planners, etc.) to discuss housing issues and solutions.

STRATEGY 10. SUPPORT LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS AT THE STATE-LEVEL TO IMPROVE HOUSING OUTCOMES.

When opportunities arise, engage in lobbying to support best practices and innovative housing solutions through state legislative changes. The City has already identified several priority issues (see recommended actions), but future efforts could also include tracking respected local housing policy platforms such as Housing Colorado's legislative agenda and the Colorado Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) lobbying efforts.

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

- Promote state exploration of single-stair access codes.
- Support construction defects reform to improve market feasibility of attached ownership products.
- Reform mitigation of damages from methamphetamine and CDPHE clean-up standards.

- Advocate for transitional housing to be included in unit counts toward the City's Prop 123 goal.

STRATEGY 11. MONITOR GOAL PROGRESS AND HOUSING PROGRAM OUTCOMES.

As has been discussed throughout this Plan, the City has invested extensive staff and financial resources to addressing housing needs, including the development of multiple new housing programs such as the ADU Production Program and At Home in GJ Landlord and Tenant Program. (The Land and Building Acquisition Program and Affordable Housing Production Incentive were also created but have not received budgeted funding). The City has also committed to a quantitative production goal as part of Proposition 123: to increase affordable housing stock by 3% per year—or 374 units by December 31, 2026.

Critical to the success of these investments is consistent and transparent monitoring for program efficacy, potential improvements, and documenting achievements.

For example, the State of Colorado is developing an ADU financing program, which may include grant funding—once implemented, this tool could be incorporated into Grand Junction's program.

Recommended actions for Grand Junction:

- Continue to monitor the City's affordable housing production—and progress toward Proposition 123 goals—as well as program outcomes for all housing programs.

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- Ensure transparent tracking of progress and regular (annual) reporting to City Council and the community.
- As needed, modify programs to improve outcomes and/or create new programs to address evolving needs.

RELATIVE COST AND IMPACT OF STRATEGIES

Figure 5 plots the updated strategy recommendations along two axes to help gauge their relative cost and impact. It should be noted that “cost” is used broadly and can mean financial cost, staffing resources, political effort, etc. Note that cost and impact may differ from the figure depending on final policy/program design.

Strategies in the lower left portion of the figure are generally low cost but also low impact. Cost increases as you move to the right (x-axis) and impact increases as you move up (y-axis). Strategies in the upper right are generally high cost but also high impact. Strategies are color-coordinated based on their implementation timeline.

This matrix should not be the only criteria for evaluating strategies but does provide some guidance in considering the most effective options given resource constraints.

Figure 5. Relative Cost and Impact of Recommended Strategies



Source: Root Policy Research.

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CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

As the City of Grand Junction continues to pursue implementation of the Comprehensive Plan—including building “Strong Neighborhoods and Housing Choices”—the strategies outlined above provide a roadmap for achieving desired outcomes and addressing identified housing needs.

A balanced housing stock accommodates a full “life cycle community”—where there are housing options for each stage of life from career starters through centenarians—which in turn supports the local economy and contributes to community culture. Encouraging the market to develop sufficient supply to meet demand as well as actions that help mitigate price increases and preserve both market-rate and publicly assisted housing affordability will help provide essential housing for residents of Grand Junction.

Implementation of the strategies will require the City to address housing challenges head-on, pursue new policies, programs, and funding sources, and work collaboratively with regional stakeholders and public-private partnerships.

APPENDIX A.

Key Housing Metrics Data Update



Root Policy Research

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Appendix A

Grand Valley

KEY HOUSING METRICS DATA UPDATE 2024

PREPARED FOR:

City of Grand Junction

UPDATED

7/15/2024

This memo provides a data refresh on key housing metrics in Mesa County and the City of Grand Junction. The update focuses on specific data points that were included in the 2021 Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment and were instrumental in guiding policy recommendations in Grand Junction. This 2024 data refresh is in service of a Housing Strategy Update that is currently underway.

Grand Valley Housing Market Data Update

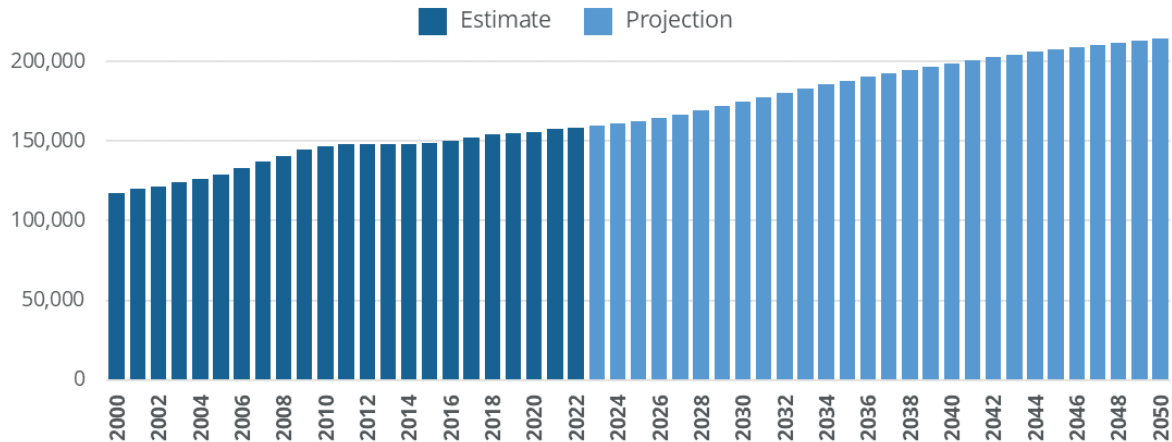
Key Findings

- Mesa County experienced continued population growth in 2022, 2023, and 2024 according to estimates and projections from the Colorado State Demographer. Between 2021 and 2022, poverty remained stable in Grand Junction at 13% and decreased in Mesa County overall from 12% to 11%.
- At the median, renter income kept pace with rising rental costs between 2021 and 2022; however, rental affordability challenges persist
 - Between 2020 and 2022, the rental market saw losses of units priced below \$800 per month and increases in units priced above \$1,500 per month.
 - In 2024, the median market-rate rent in Grand Junction is \$1,500—well above the median rent affordable to the median renter household (\$1,007 in 2022—the most recent year for which data are available).
 - Further, rental vacancy rates remain extremely low (3.1%).
 - Renter cost burden, which occurs when households pay more than 30% of their gross monthly income in housing costs, decreased from 47% in 2021 to 44% in 2022, but still indicates about 4,500 renter households are paying more than 30% of their income on rent.
 - Countywide there are 2,973 households (5,999 individuals) on the waitlist to receive a housing voucher; 94% have incomes below 50% AMI.
- A rental gaps analysis shows a rental affordability gap of 1,211 units priced below \$625 (affordable to households earning less than \$25,000). This is down from the 2019 gap of 2,168 units—primarily due to rising renter incomes—but needs persist, especially among lower income renters.
- Home prices are stabilizing after sharp increases into 2022; however, affordability (or purchasing power) is dropping due to relatively high interest rates. Forty-two percent of homes sold in 2021 were affordable to households earning 0-80% AMI; this decreased to 14% in 2022, 11% in 2023, and 9% in 2024 YTD.
- Cash purchases—signaling investor presence—are increasingly common at entry-level price-points, particularly among products affordable to 50% AMI households but also among products affordable to 80% AMI.
- A for-sale gaps analysis shows a growing purchase affordability gap and an acute affordability mismatch impacting households earning up to \$75,000 per year, or 120% AMI (up from \$80% AMI in 2019).

Population, Income, and Poverty

Population. Figure 1 presents estimates of Mesa County's population in 2000–2022 and population projections for 2023–2050. Mesa County was home to 158,534 residents in 2022 and projections estimate 161,143 residents in 2024. The county's population is expected to rise to 214,206 residents by 2050, largely due to positive net migration.

Figure 1.
Mesa County Total Population and Projections, 2000–2050

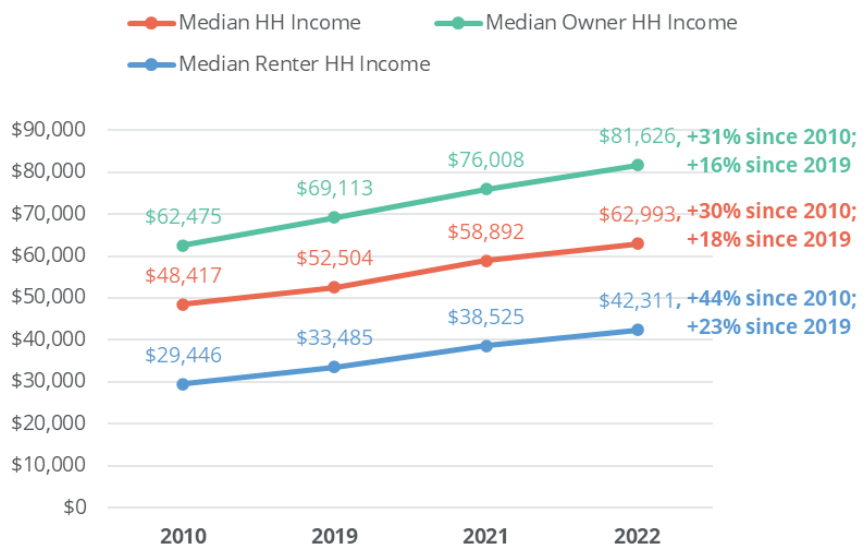


Source: DOLA.

Income. Figure 2 below presents changes in median household income overall and for owner and renter households between 2010 and 2022. In 2022, renter households had a median income of \$42,311—just over half of the median owner household income of \$81,626. Renter incomes grew at faster rates than owner incomes since 2010 and 2021. Note that data are 5-year averages, so estimated median incomes for 2021 and 2022 may be falsely inflated by COVID-19 stimulus funding.

Figure 2.
Median Household Income by Tenure, Grand Junction, 2010–2022

Source:
2010, 2019, 2021, 2022 5-year
ACS.



According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, average annual wages in Mesa County rose at about the same rate as incomes overall: up 16% since 2019. However, wage increases were not experienced equally across industries.

Figure 3.
Average Annual
Wages by Industry,
Mesa County 2019
and 2022

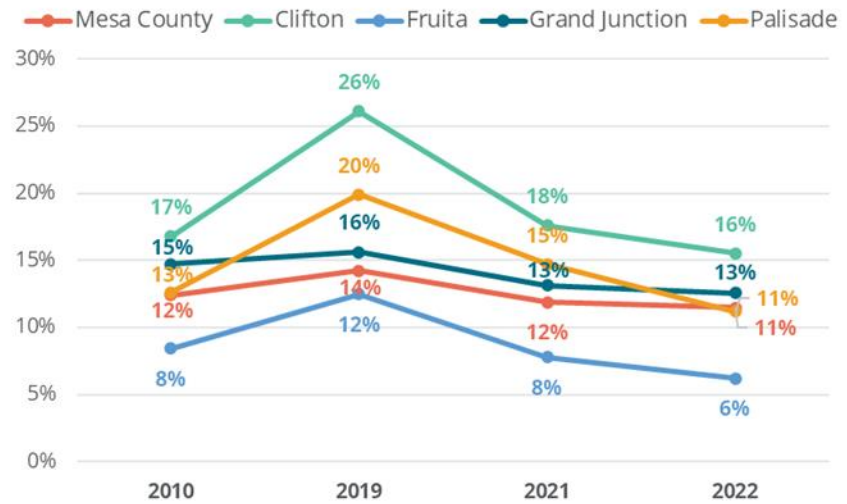
Source:
Bureau of Labor Statistics and Root
Policy Research.

	2019	2022	% Change
All Industries	\$45,849	\$53,406	16%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting	\$38,931	\$38,456	-1%
Mining, Oil, and Gas	\$93,816	\$101,133	8%
Construction	\$54,363	\$61,080	12%
Manufacturing	\$46,113	\$50,552	10%
Wholesale Trade	\$60,681	\$67,090	11%
Retail Trade	\$32,447	\$44,887	38%
Transportation and Warehousing	\$51,606	\$57,229	11%
Utilities	\$91,048	\$96,345	6%
Information	\$49,258	\$65,152	32%
Finance and Insurance	\$70,066	\$79,541	14%
Real Estate	\$41,753	\$48,643	17%
Professional, Technology, and Science	\$57,396	\$69,553	21%
Management	\$94,874	\$89,237	-6%
Admin Support and Waste Managemer	\$37,992	\$48,059	26%
Educational Services	\$20,369	\$26,323	29%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$49,062	\$59,040	20%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$20,675	\$25,366	23%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$16,904	\$21,390	27%
Other Services	\$33,291	\$39,686	19%
Public Administration	\$62,297	\$70,820	14%

Poverty. Poverty rates for 2010, 2019, 2021, and 2022 are presented in Figure 4. In the City of Grand Junction, poverty rates were stable at 13%. In Mesa County overall and in all other jurisdictions, poverty decreased slightly since 2021. Note that data are 5-year averages, so estimated poverty rates for 2021 and 2022 partially reflect years impacted by temporary COVID-19 relief funding. In absence of this funding, poverty is likely higher than these estimates convey.

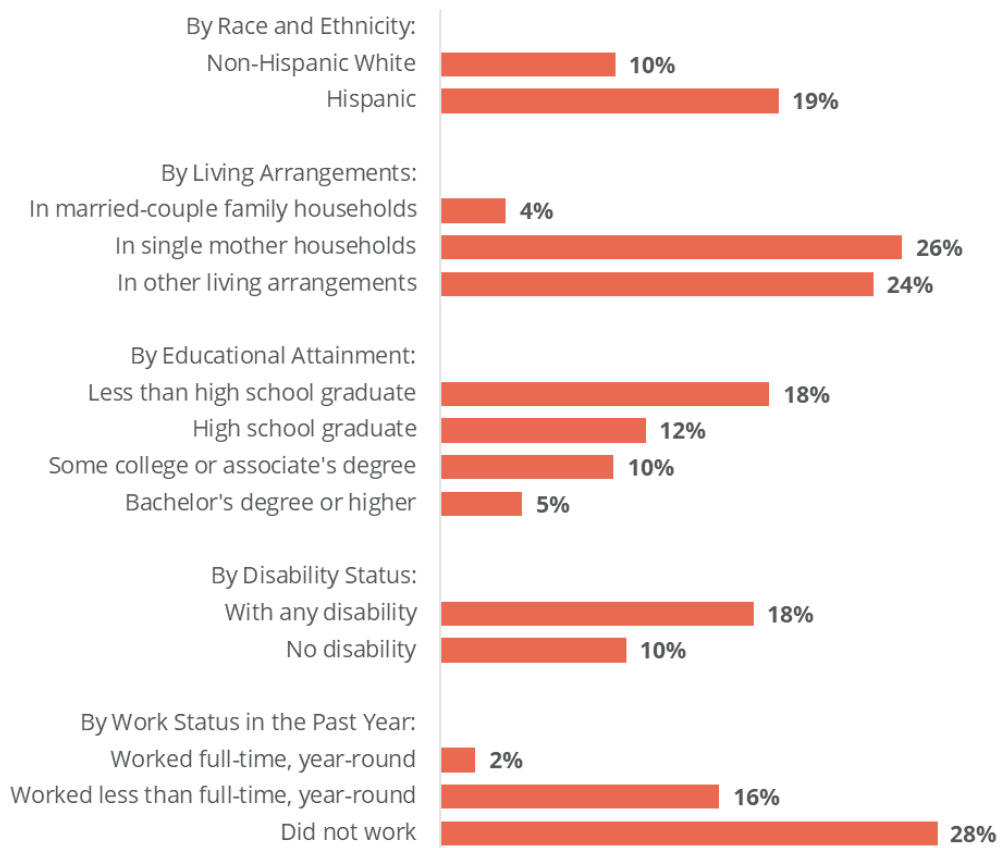
Figure 4.
Individual Poverty
Rate, Mesa County
and by Jurisdiction,
2010–2022

Source:
 2010, 2019, 2021, 2022 5-year ACS.



Individual poverty rates by race and ethnicity, living arrangements, educational attainment, disability status, and work status are presented in Figure 5. Poverty rates are especially high (18% or higher) for Hispanic residents, residents living in single mother households or nonfamily arrangements, residents who have not completed high school, residents with disabilities, and residents who did not work in the previous 12 months.

Figure 5.
Individual Poverty Rates by Selected Characteristics, Mesa County, 2022



Note: Additional racial and ethnic groups are not presented due to large margins of error. Educational attainment is calculated for population 25 years or older. Work status is calculated for population 16 to 64 years old.

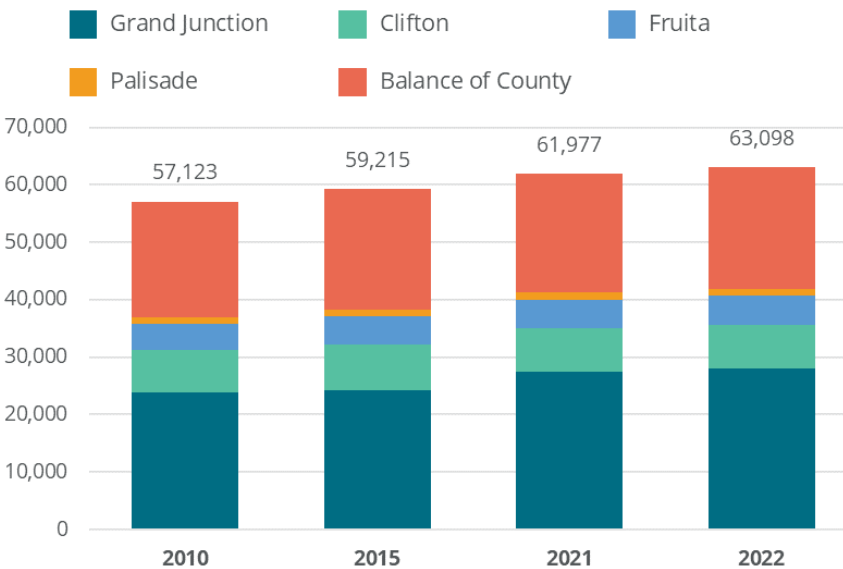
Source: 2022 5-year ACS.

Housing Inventory

Housing units. Figure 6 shows total housing units in Mesa County and by jurisdiction. There were 63,098 housing units in Mesa County in 2022, the greatest share of which are located in Grand Junction.

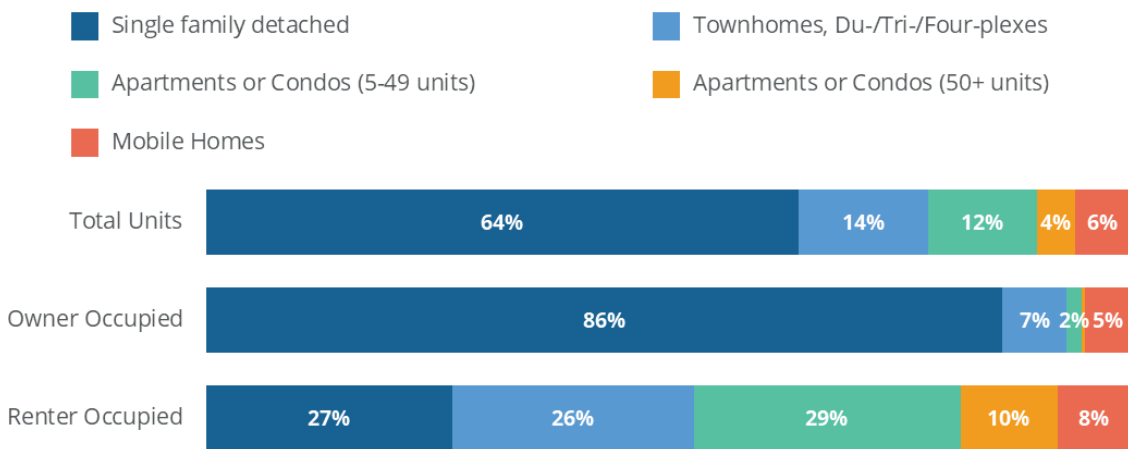
Figure 6.
Total Housing Units,
Mesa County, 2010–
2022

Source:
2010, 2015, 2021, and 2022 5-year
ACS.



Distributions of housing units by unit type are presented in Figure 7. About two-thirds (64%) of housing units in Grand Junction are single family detached. Owner households occupy single family detached units at a much greater rate (86%) than renter households (27%). Renter households are more likely than owner households to occupy mobile homes or attached units including townhomes, du-/tri-/four-plexes, and multifamily buildings (i.e., apartments or condominiums).

Figure 7.
Units by Type Overall and by Tenure, Grand Junction, 2022



Source: 2022 5-year ACS.

Figure 8 presents units in Grand Junction by number of bedrooms and by tenure. Renter occupied units are more likely to have two or fewer bedrooms, while owner occupied units are more likely to have three or more bedrooms.

Figure 8.
Housing Inventory
by Bedrooms by
Tenure, Grand
Junction, 2022

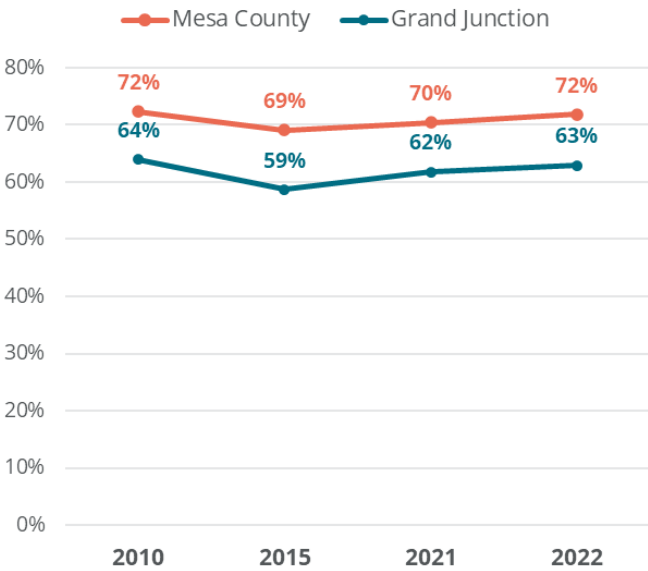
Source:
2022 5-year ACS.

	Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied	
	#	%	#	%
Total Units	17,683	100%	10,410	100%
No bedroom	23	0%	663	6%
1 bedroom	223	1%	2,327	22%
2 bedrooms	2,767	16%	4,224	41%
3 bedrooms	10,132	57%	2,481	24%
4 bedrooms	3,678	21%	561	5%
5 or more bedrooms	860	5%	154	1%

Tenure. Figure 9 shows changes in homeownership rates in Mesa County and Grand Junction since 2010 and since data were last updated in 2021. Since 2021, homeownership has increased by one percentage point in Grand Junction and by two percentage points in Mesa County.

Figure 9.
Homeownership
Rates, Mesa County
and Grand Junction,
2010–2022

Source:
2010, 2015, 2021, and 2022 5-year
ACS.



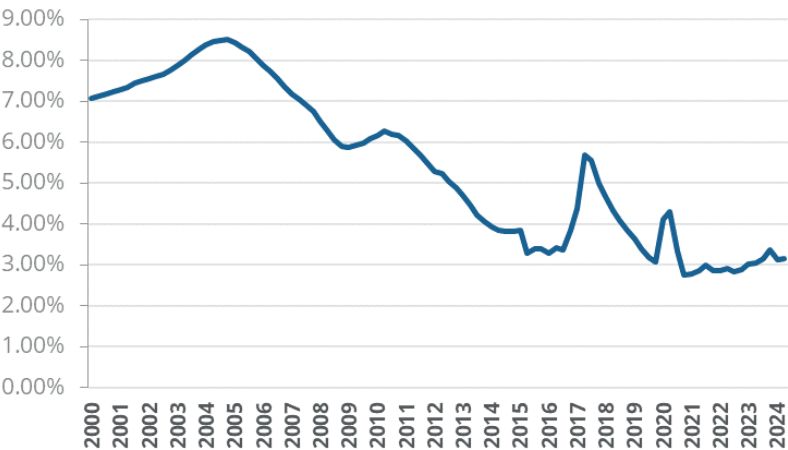
Rental Market Trends

Vacancy. As shown in Figure 10, multifamily rental vacancy rates remain very low in Grand Junction, signaling an extremely tight rental market. Generally, a vacancy rate around 5%-7% is considered a healthy market.

Figure 10.
Quarterly
Multifamily Rental
Vacancy Rate,
Grand Junction,
2015–2024 YTD

Note: Data reflect multifamily rentals only. 2024 data are current through June 2024.

Source: CoStar.

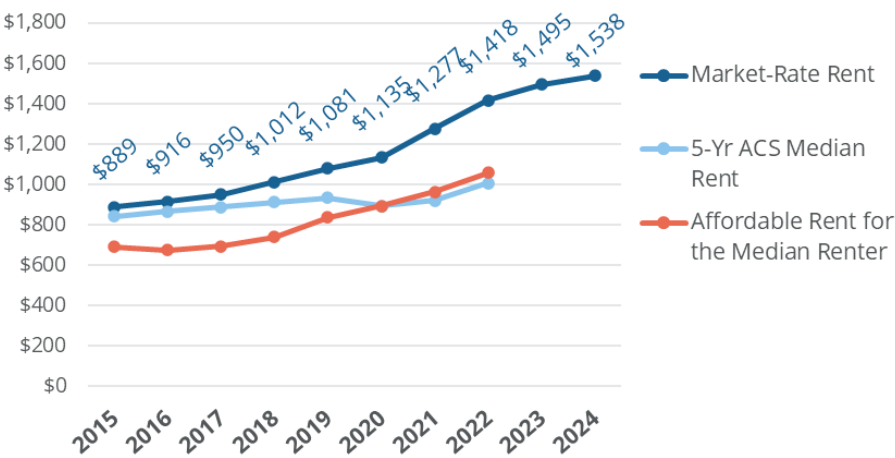


Market rents. Median market-rate rent in Grand Junction is currently about \$1,500¹—well above the monthly rent affordable to the median renter (\$1,007 in 2022—the most recent year for which data are available).

Figure 11 shows the typical market-rate rent compared to affordable rent for the median renter. ACS data are included for reference and discussed in more detail below.

Figure 11.
Typical Market-
Rate Rent,
Grand Junction,
2015–2023

Source:
Zillow Observed Rental
Index, 2022 5-year ACS, and
Root Policy Research.



¹ The Zillow Observed Rental Index (ZORI) offers a measure of rents that is most representative of what a household would encounter in shopping for a market-rate unit today. The index represents the average monthly price of the middle 30% of market-rate units by price and includes both multifamily and single family rental options.

ACS Rents. While the market-rate rental data above reflect the most representative measure of what a household would encounter in shopping for a market-rate unit today, American Community Survey (ACS) data offer more detail on the distribution of rental prices as well as an opportunity to compare rental trends across jurisdictions. Note that ACS data are based on residents’ reporting what they pay for monthly rental costs in Census surveys—this results in data that lag market data and that typically show lower median rents than market sources.²

ACS median rents by jurisdiction are shown in Figure 12. As of 2022, Fruita had the highest median rent in the county and experienced the largest increase in rents from 2010.

Figure 12.
Median Gross Rent,
Mesa County and by
Jurisdiction, 2010,
2015, 2020, and
2022.

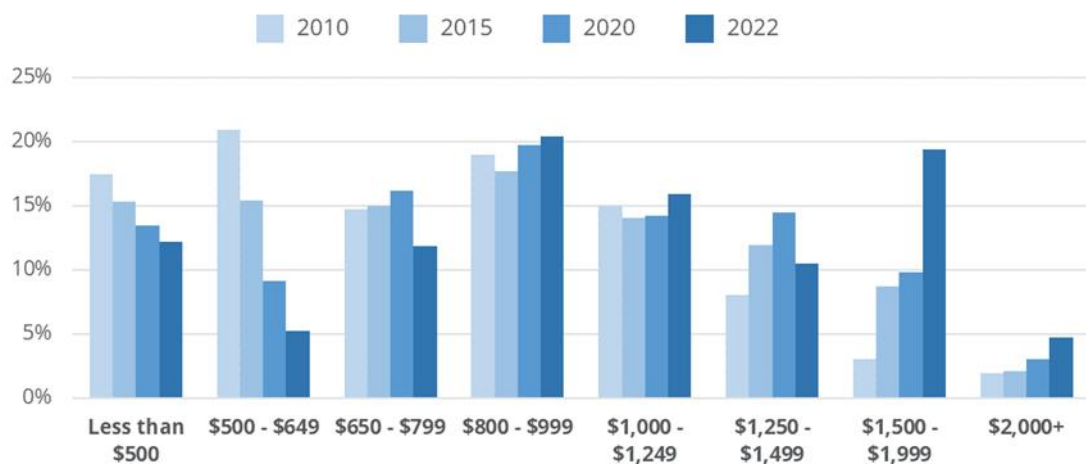
Source:
2010, 2015, 2020, 2022 5-year ACS.

	2010	2015	2020	2022	Percent Change 2010-2022
Mesa County	\$810	\$837	\$963	\$1,089	+ 34%
Clifton	\$741	\$698	\$969	\$1,031	+ 39%
Fruita	\$867	\$1,046	\$1,204	\$1,338	+ 54%
Grand Junction	\$770	\$844	\$895	\$1,007	+ 31%
Palisade	\$692	\$768	\$814	\$990	+ 43%

Growth in Grand Junction’s median rent between 2020 and 2022 is driven by losses in units priced below \$800 per month and gains in units priced above \$1,500, as shown in Figure 13.

² ACS data reflect residents’ reporting of what they pay for monthly rental costs in Census surveys. Residents who receive subsidies such as Housing Choice Vouchers report what they pay after the subsidy is applied, not the market rent of the unit. Further, renter households who have occupied their units for a long time often pay less than market rate for their units. Relative to the distribution of rental units currently available for rent at market rate, the distribution of rental units in ACS data may overstate the number of units affordable to low income households. Estimates of ACS median rent are likely lower than the median rent a household would encounter in shopping for a market-rate unit.

Figure 13.
Rent Distribution, Grand Junction, 2010, 2015, 2020, and 2022.



Source: 2010, 2015, 2020, 2022 5-year ACS.

Short-term rentals. Short-term rentals, or STRs, can play a unique role within housing markets because they can provide economic benefits (to homeowners through rental revenue and the City through sales tax/tourism revenue) but may disrupt the long-term rental market if they account for a substantial portion of the total housing stock (this is most common in tourist-driven economies such as mountain resort communities in Colorado).

According to data from the City, there are 289 homes listed as short-term rentals in Grand Junction. There are 132 total permits within the downtown area, defined as south of North Avenue, west of North 17th Street, north of Interstate 70 Business, and east of Highway 50. Within the downtown area there are 105 STRs on residentially zoned lots, consuming approximately 8.6% (105 of 1,218) of housing units downtown. Active STR listings in Grand Junction account for approximately 1% of the total housing stock in the city. This compares to 44% of the housing stock in Colorado’s mountain resort counties—Eagle, Grand, Pitkin, Routt, and Summit.³

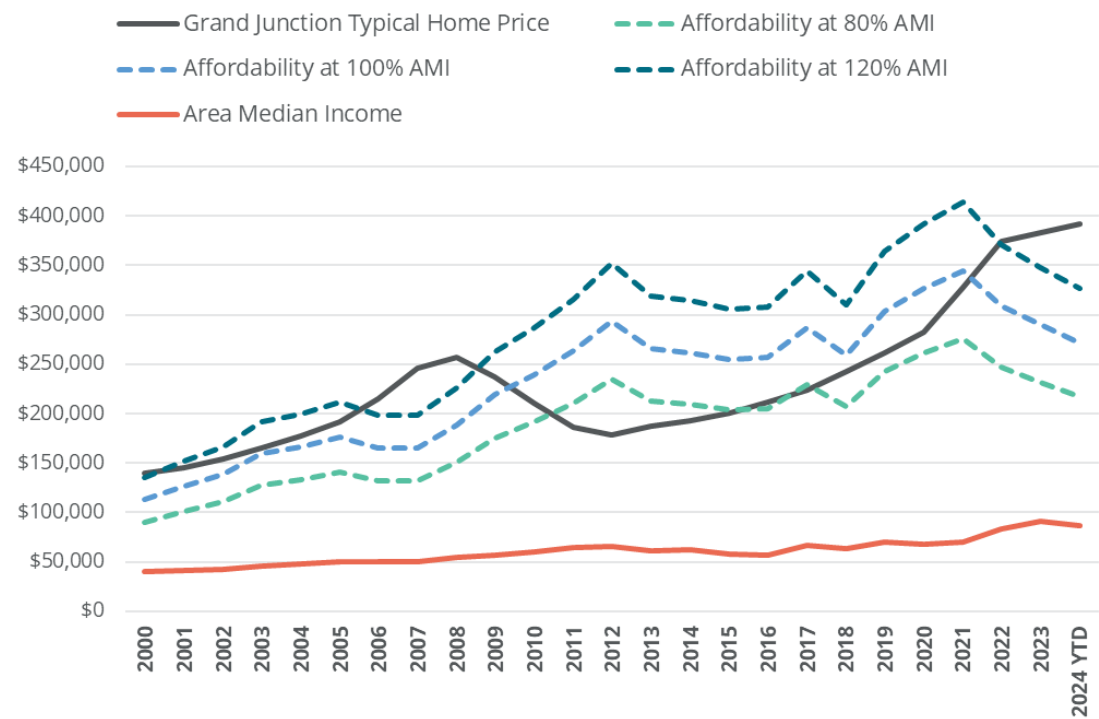
³ https://news.airbnb.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/06/STR-Colorado-Impact-Study_Final_05.25.2022.pdf

For-Sale Market Trends

Home values. Figure 14 presents the market price of a typical home in Grand Junction alongside the maximum affordable home price for households earning 80%, 100%, and 120% AMI. Home price growth accelerated through the late-2010s and early 2020s, stabilizing in 2022-2024 as interest rate growth caused affordability to fall.

Typical-priced homes have been unaffordable to households earning 80% AMI since 2018. Typical-priced homes became unaffordable for households earning 100% AMI and 120% AMI in 2022.

Figure 14.
Typical Home Price and Affordability by AMI Level, 2000–2024 YTD

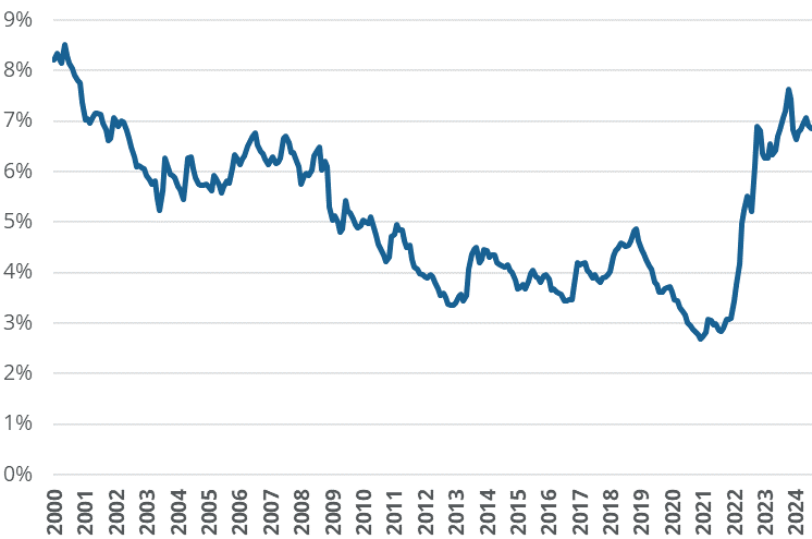


Note: 2024 YTD data include 1/2024-4/2024. Calculations use 4-person AMI limits.
Source: Zillow Home Value Index, HUD AMI Limits, and Root Policy Research.

Changes in purchase affordability—the dotted lines in Figure 14—are due to changes in incomes and changes in interest rates. Figure 15 shows average interest rates for mortgages from January 2000 to July 2024. Following pandemic-related interest rate hikes, average mortgage rates are higher than they have been since the early 2000s—currently, around 6.85%.

Figure 15.
30-Year Fixed Rate
Mortgage Average,
United States,
January 2000–July
2024

Source:
 Freddie Mac and FRED by the
 Federal Reserve of St. Louis.



The first row of the table in Figure 16 presents the maximum purchase price for households earning \$86,400, Grand Junction’s 2024 AMI, at different interest rates. The second row compares the maximum affordable price at the given interest rate to the maximum price at 3.0%, the prevailing rate in late 2020 and 2021. Solely as a result of rising interest rates, purchase affordability has decreased by between 33.3% and 36.6% since 2020/2021.

Figure 16.
Effect of Interest Rates on Home Purchase Affordability

	Interest Rate												
	2.0%	2.5%	3.0%	3.5%	4.0%	4.5%	5.0%	5.5%	6.0%	6.5%	7.0%	7.5%	8.0%
Maximum Affordable Price	\$482K	\$451K	\$423K	\$397K	\$373K	\$352K	\$332K	\$314K	\$297K	\$282K	\$268K	\$255K	\$243K
Change in affordability vs. 3.0% rate	+13.9%	+6.6%	0.0%	-6.1%	-11.8%	-16.8%	-21.5%	-25.8%	-29.8%	-33.3%	-36.6%	-39.7%	-42.6%

3.0%
6.5%
7.0%

→ Change 2020/2021 to present

Note: Purchase affordability estimates assume households spend no more than 30% of income—in this case, Grand Junction’s 2024 AMI of \$86,400—on housing. Calculations assume a 30-year fixed rate mortgage with 10% down and 25% of monthly housing costs to non-mortgage expenses such as property taxes, utilities, and HOA fees.

Source: HUD AMI limits and Root Policy Research.

Home sales. Figure 17 shows the number of homes sold in Mesa County each year, 2019–2024 YTD, in total and by jurisdiction according to MLS data from Bray Real Estate. Over 70% of homes sold in the county each year were located in Grand Junction.

Figure 17.
Number Homes Sold, Mesa County and by Jurisdiction, 2019–2024 YTD

	Mesa County	Grand Junction	Clifton	Fruita	Palisade	Other
2019	4,109	2,934	285	433	91	366
2020	4,256	2,973	274	465	91	453
2021	639	458	44	61	14	62
2022	3,265	2,302	257	397	122	187
2023	2,886	2,112	199	353	81	141
2024 YTD	949	679	92	101	23	54

Note: 2024 YTD data include sales from 1/24-5/24.

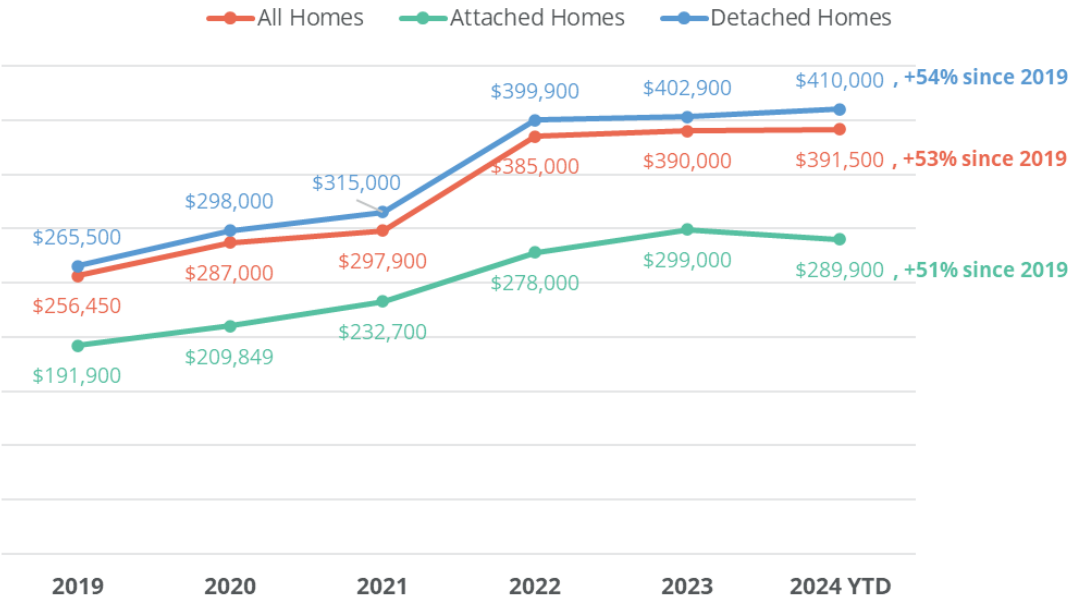
Source: MLS data (Bray Real Estate) and Root Policy Research.

Characteristics of sold homes. Detached units accounted for 87-89% of homes sold each year, while 11-13% of homes sold each year were attached. Studios and one-bedroom units accounted for around 1% of sales each year while two-bedroom units accounted for 12-14% of sales each year. The greatest shares of homes sold had three bedrooms (57-59% of sales each year) and four bedrooms (22-24% of sales each year). Between 3% and 6% of homes sold each year had five or more bedrooms.

Seventy percent or more of homes sold each year were built in 1980 or later, with between 41% and 48% of homes sold each year being built since 2000. Eight percent or less of homes sold each year were built before 1950.

Sale prices. Figure 18 shows median sale prices for all homes, attached homes, and detached homes in Mesa County each year, 2019–2024 YTD. The median home sales price in Mesa County increased by 53% from \$256,450 in 2019 to \$391,500 in 2024 YTD. In 2024 YTD, the median sale price for detached homes in Mesa County is \$410,000—significantly higher than that for attached homes (\$289,900).

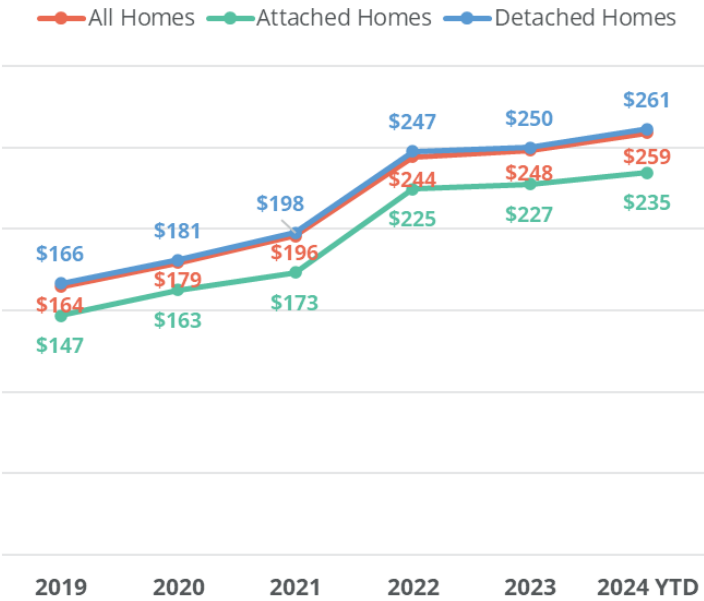
Figure 18.
Median Sale Price by Type, Mesa County, 2019–2024 YTD



Note: 2024 YTD data include sales from 1/24-5/24.
Source: MLS data (Bray Real Estate) and Root Policy Research.

Median sale prices per square foot for all homes, attached homes, and detached homes are presented below. In 2024, the median price per square foot in Mesa County is \$259, up 57% from \$164 in 2019.

Figure 19.
Median Sale Price by Square Foot for Attached and Detached Homes, Mesa County, 2019–2024 YTD

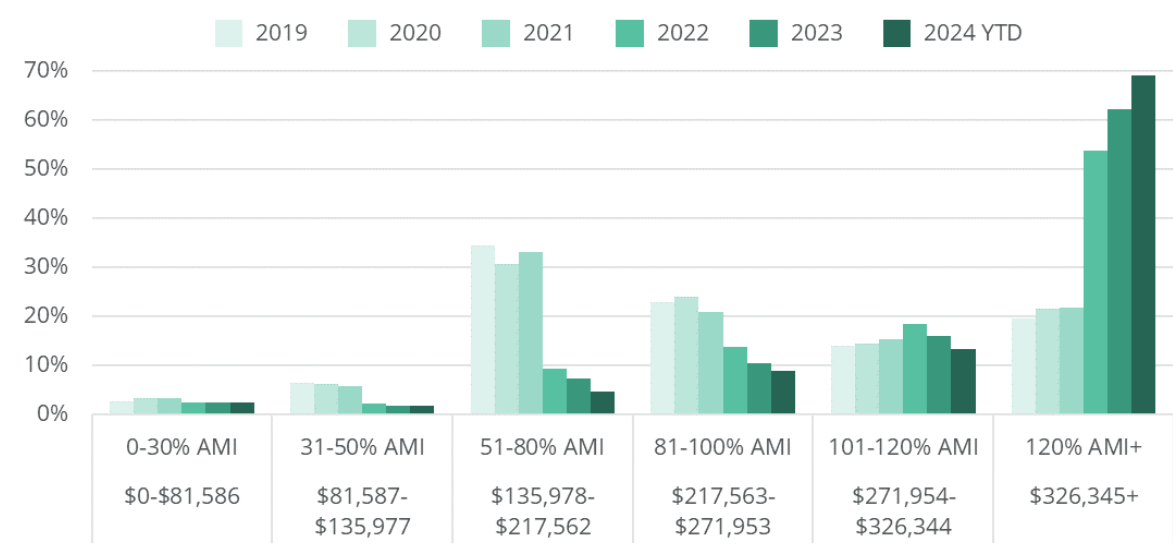


Note:
2024 YTD data include sales from 1/24-5/24.
Source:
MLS data (Bray Real Estate) and Root Policy Research.

Price distribution. Figure 20 shows the percent of home sales in specified affordability ranges each year, 2019–2024 YTD. Home purchase affordability has decreased since 2019, with the greatest decreases in affordability beginning with interest rate hikes in 2022.

Forty-two percent of homes sold in 2021 were affordable to households earning 0-80% AMI; this decreased to 14% in 2022, 11% in 2023, and 9% in 2024 YTD. Twenty-two percent of homes sold in 2021 were affordable to households earning 120% AMI or more; this rose to 54% in 2022, 62% in 2023, and 69% in 2024 YTD.

Figure 20.
Home Sales Distribution by Affordability Level, Mesa County, 2019–2024 YTD

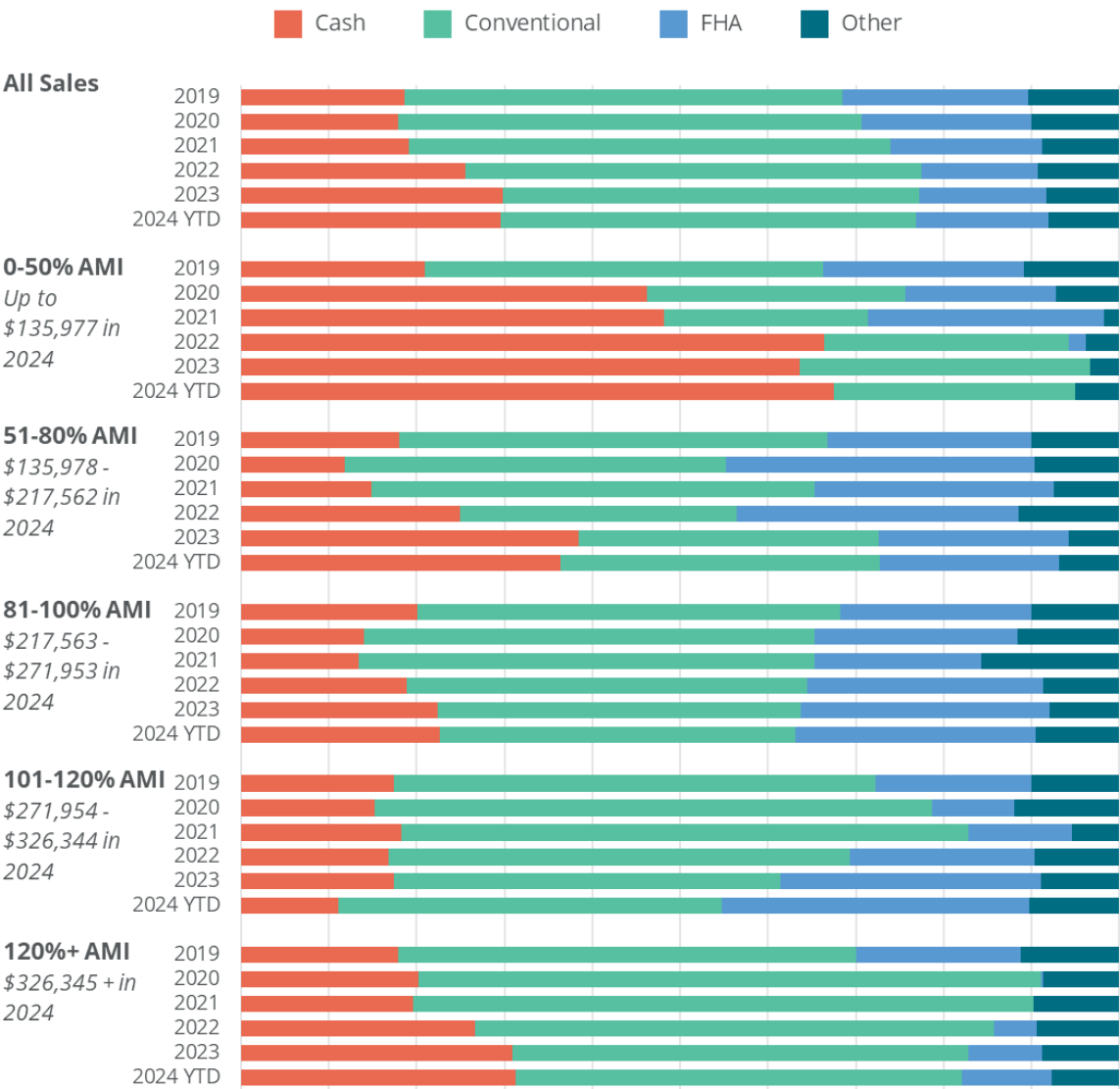


Note: **Affordable price ranges are current as of 2024 but differ by year with changes in AMI and interest rates.** 2024 YTD data include sales from 1/24-5/24. Data use 4-person HUD AMI limits.
Source: MLS data (Bray Real Estate), HUD AMI limits, and Root Policy Research.

Figure 21 shows the distribution of financing types employed in home sales overall and by affordability range in Mesa County. Investor presence in Mesa County’s home sales market, as indicated by the prevalence of cash purchases, has grown overall since 2019. Thirty percent of homes sold in Mesa County in 2023 and 2024 YTD were purchased with cash.

In particular, cash purchases are increasingly common in the 0-50% AMI and 51-80% AMI affordability levels. This indicates that cash buyers are crowding out traditionally financed households at increasingly higher price points.

Figure 21.
Distribution Financing Type by Affordability Level, Mesa County, 2019–2024 YTD



Note: **Affordable price ranges are current as of 2024 but differ by year with changes in AMI and interest rates.** 2024 YTD data include sales from 1/24-5/24. Data use 4-person HUD AMI limits.
Source: MLS data (Bray Real Estate), HUD AMI limits, and Root Policy Research.

Affordability

Cost burden. Figures 22 and 23 present cost burden and severe cost burden for owners and renters. Households are considered to be cost burdened when they pay 30% or more of their gross income in housing costs. Households are severely cost burdened when they pay 50% or more of their gross income in housing costs. In 2022, 44% of Grand Junction’s renter households are cost burdened, down from 47% in 2021. Owner cost burden increased in Grand Junction, from 21% in 2021 to 23% in 2022.

Figure 22.
Renter Cost Burden, Mesa
County and by
Jurisdiction, 2022

Source:
2022 5-year ACS.

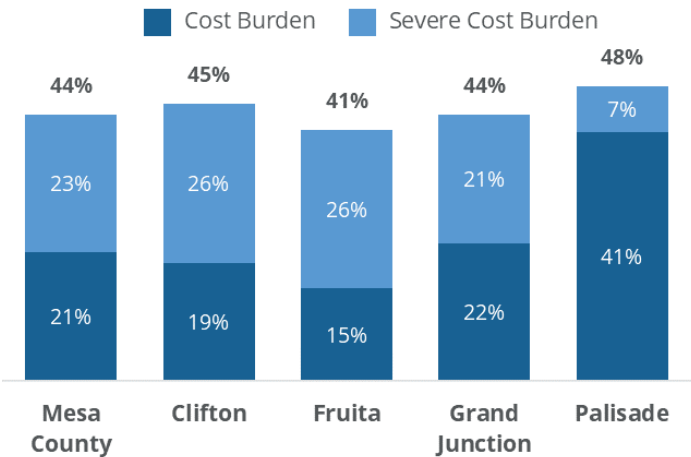
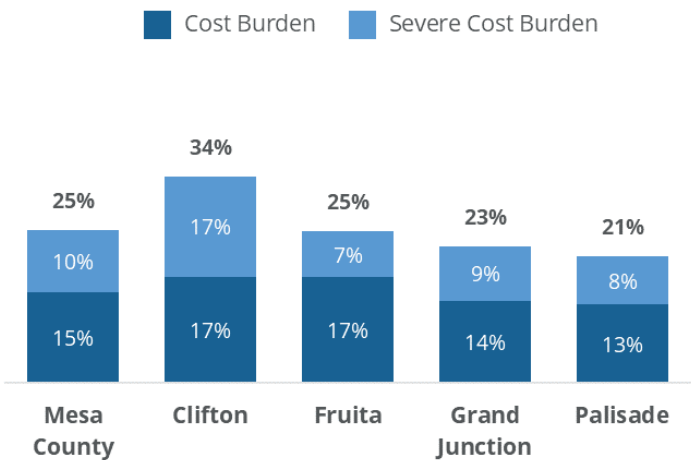


Figure 23.
Owner Cost Burden, Mesa
County and by
Jurisdiction, 2022

Source:
2022 5-year ACS.



Housing and transportation costs. Figure 24 broadens the affordability analysis by contextualizing housing costs with transportation and other costs in Grand Junction in 2019, 2021, and 2022. On average, Grand Junction households currently spend 25% of their income on housing costs and 22% of their income on transportation costs, with the remaining 53% of income going to other necessities, debt, savings, and disposable income. At the 2022 median household income of \$62,993, this translates to spending \$1,312 on housing, \$1,155 on transportation, and \$2,782 on other expenses and savings each month.

Figure 24.
Typical Grand
Junction Household
Monthly Budget, 2019,
2021, and 2022

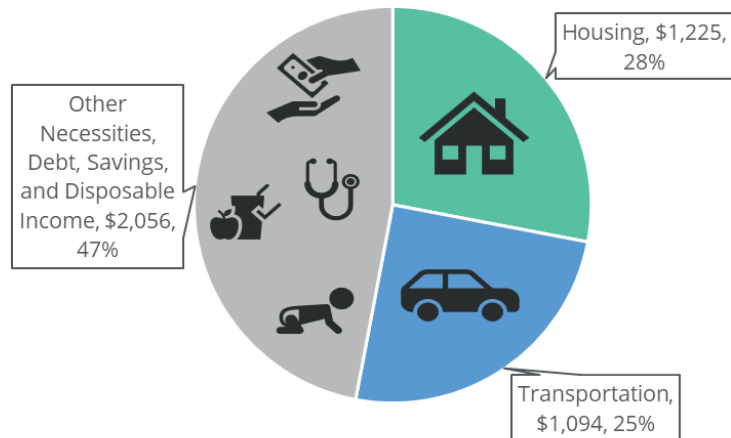
Note:

Figures for 2021 and 2022 apply 2020 housing/transportation/other expenses shares to 2021 and 2022 median household incomes.

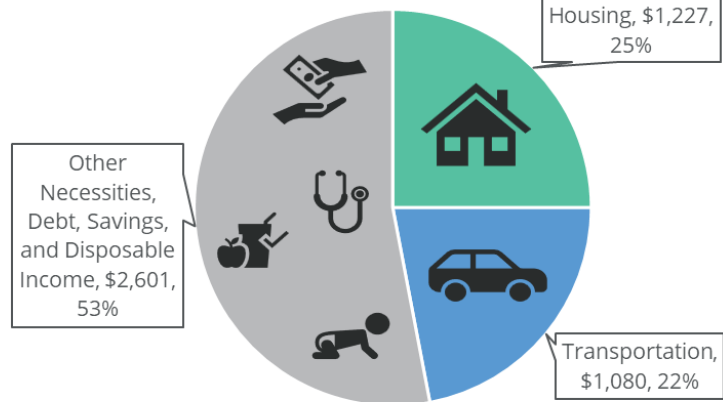
Source:

2019, 2021, and 2022 5-year ACS estimates (Median Household Income), Center for Neighborhood Technology Housing and Transportation Index 2019 and 2020 Releases, and Root Policy Research.

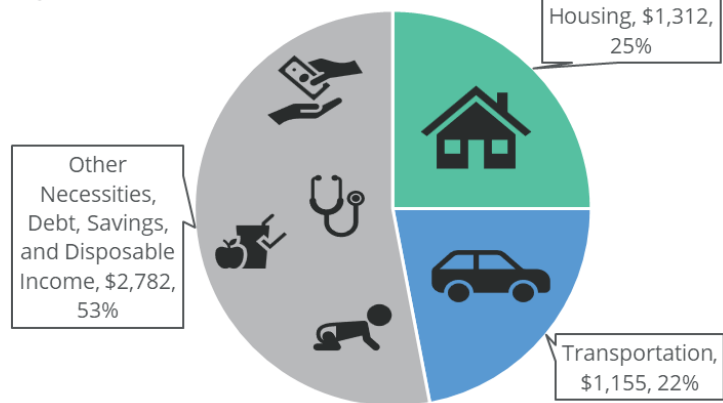
2019, Median Household Income: \$52,504



2021, Median Household Income: \$58,892



2022, Median Household Income: \$62,993



Affordable housing inventory. Mesa County's designated affordable housing stock is summarized in Figure 25. In this analysis, "designated affordable" includes income-restricted units administered by Grand Junction Housing Authority (GJHA), nonprofit organizations including Housing Resources of Western Colorado, Volunteers of America, Rocky Mountain Communities, and Catholic Outreach, and private real estate development

companies. Rents in these units may be subsidized by Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), project-based vouchers, HUD funds, or other funding sources.

Altogether, there are 1,838 designated affordable units in Mesa County, most of which are deeply subsidized units wherein tenants pay 30% of their income in rent. The vast majority of affordable units in Mesa County (82%) have one or two bedrooms; 17% have three bedrooms; and 1% have four bedrooms. Larger families likely struggle to find affordable units large enough to accommodate them.

Figure 25.
Designated Affordable Units by Type and Bedrooms, Mesa County, 2024

	Total Units	% 1 BR	% 2 BR	% 3 BR	% 4 BR	% Other
Deeply Subsidized Units						
Tenants pay 30% of their income for rent	1,162	50%	35%	14%	1%	0%
Tax Credit Units						
Tenants pay a fixed rent based on a percentage of AMI from 30% to 60%	607	40%	36%	24%	0%	0%
Other Affordable Units						
Generally below market rent	69	19%	58%	10%	0%	13%
Total Affordable Units	1,838	45%	36%	17%	1%	1%

Note: By the end of 2024, 40 additional affordable units will be available in the Mother Theresa development. GJHA's The Current will offer 54 additional units in late 2025 or early 2026.

Source: City of Grand Junction.

In addition to the affordable units outlined above, housing vouchers or other direct landlord subsidies offer additional paths to affordability: Mesa County currently has 1,467 housing vouchers or other direct landlord subsidies in place. It should be noted that vouchers and units are not necessarily additive as vouchers can be used in subsidized units to create deeper affordability for extremely low-income households.

According to GJHA, there are currently 2,973 households (5,999 individuals) on the waitlist to receive a housing voucher—clearly demonstrating that need for affordable housing far exceeds the available supports. Of the households on the waitlist, 39% are households with children, 71% are female headed households, and 37% have a household member with some type of disability.

Affordability gaps analysis. To examine how the city's housing market is meeting the affordability needs of current residents, a gaps analysis was performed. The gaps analysis compares the supply of housing at various price points to the number of

households who can afford such housing. If there are more housing units than households, the market is “oversupplying” housing at that price point. Conversely, if there are too few units, the market is “undersupplying” housing at that price point.

Rental affordability gaps. Figures 26 and 27 show rental gaps for Grand Junction in 2019 and 2022.

As of 2022, there is an affordability gap of 1,211 units affordable to households earning less than \$25,000—units priced below \$625—in 2022.

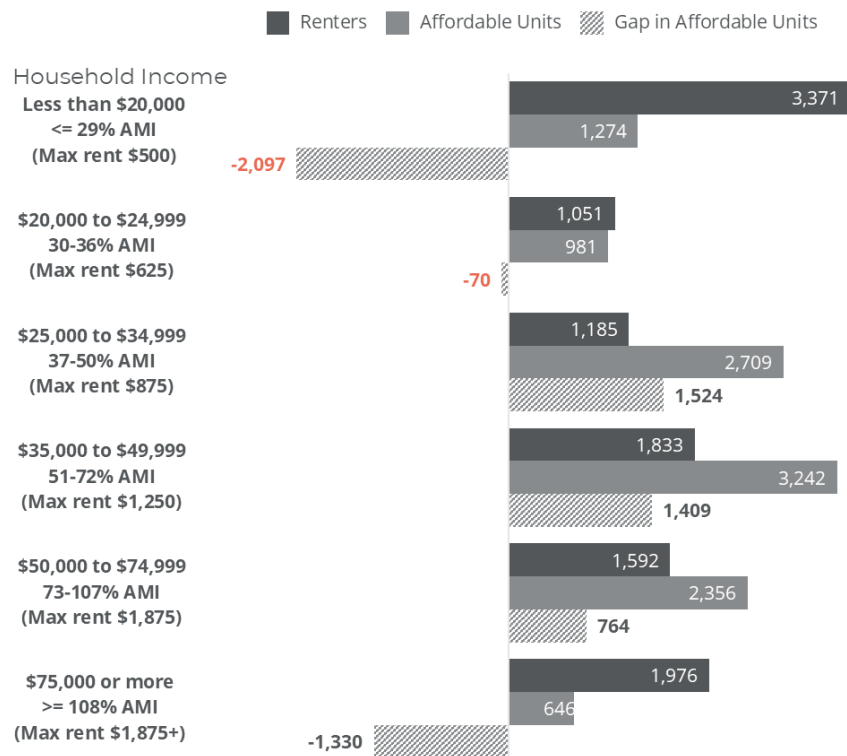
- 2,230 renter households have incomes below \$20,000 and can afford to pay \$500 in rent each month; however, there are only 1,337 rental units priced below \$500, resulting in a gap of 893 units affordable to these households.
- Another 767 renter households have incomes between \$20,000 and \$25,000 and require units priced at or below \$625, but only 449 units were priced within their affordability range, leaving a shortage—or gap—of 318 units.
- In both 2019 and 2022, rental affordability gaps were present up to roughly 30% AMI for 2-person households. Grand Junction’s 2022 rental gap (1,211 units priced below \$625) is smaller than the rental affordability gap Grand Junction faced in 2019 (2,168 units priced below \$625). This is largely due to rising renter incomes: 4,422 renter households earned less than \$25,000 in 2019, compared to 2,997 in 2022.

For-sale affordability gaps. Figures 28 and 29 show homeownership gaps for Grand Junction in 2019 and 2023-24. This analysis compares the shares of total renter households—roughly, the number of potential first-time homebuyers—with shares of total home sales affordable to them.

In 2019, 51% of Grand Junction’s renter households had incomes below \$35,000 annually. To affordably enter homeownership, these households would require homes priced at or below \$152,306. Only 8% of homes sold in Grand Junction in 2019 were priced at or below \$152,306, resulting in an affordability gap of -43% below \$35,000. This translates to roughly 80% AMI for a 2-person household.

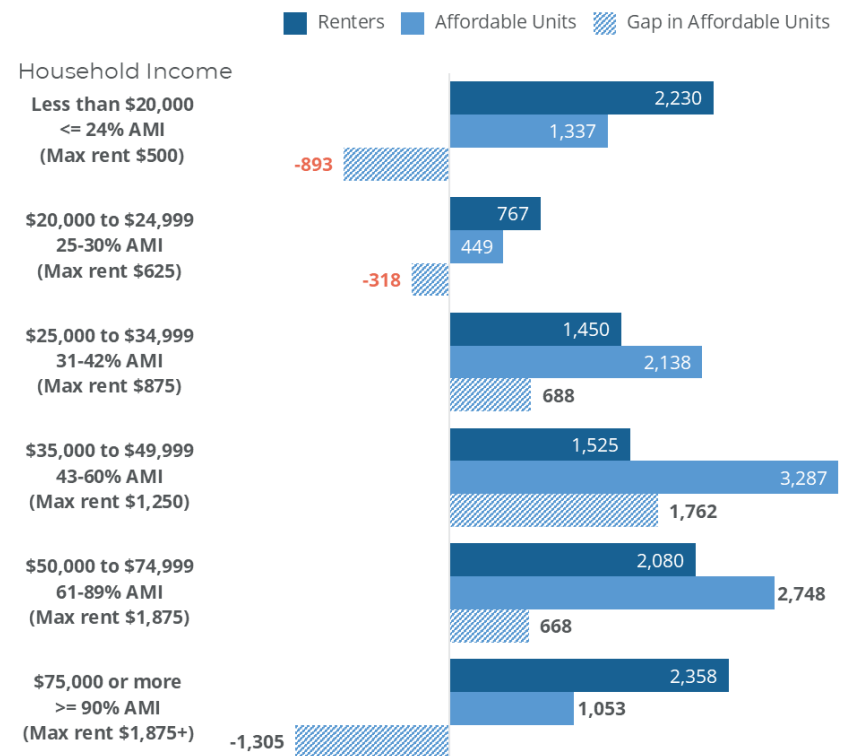
Due to rising home prices and the effects of higher interest rates on purchasing power, homeownership gaps grew and expanded to higher income levels by 2023-24. In 2022 (the most recent year for which data are available), 77% of Grand Junction’s renter households earned less than \$75,000. Based on 2023 interest rates, these households required homes priced at or below \$237,036. Only 9% of units sold in 2023 and 2024 YTD were priced at or below \$237,036, leaving an affordability gap of -68% below \$75,000. This translates to approximately 120% AMI for a 2-person household.

Figure 26.
Rental Affordability Gaps, 2019



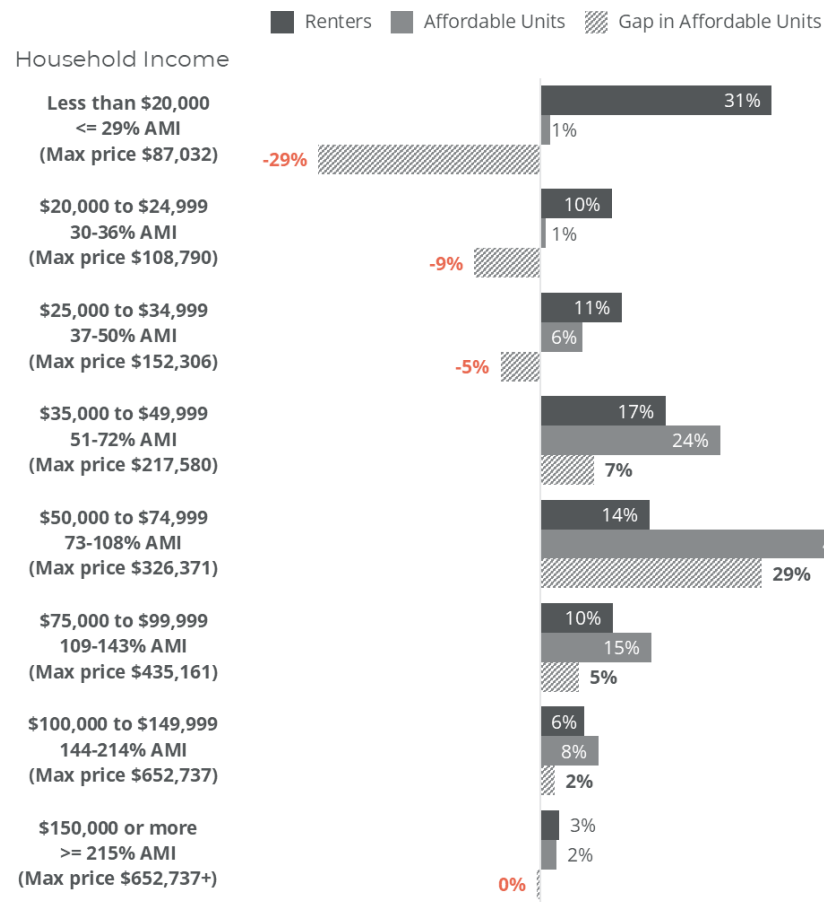
Note: AMI ranges presented are based on 4-person 2019 HUD AMI limits.
Source: 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

Figure 27.
Rental Affordability Gaps, 2022



Note: AMI ranges presented are based on 4-person 2022 HUD AMI limits.
Source: 5-year ACS and Root Policy Research.

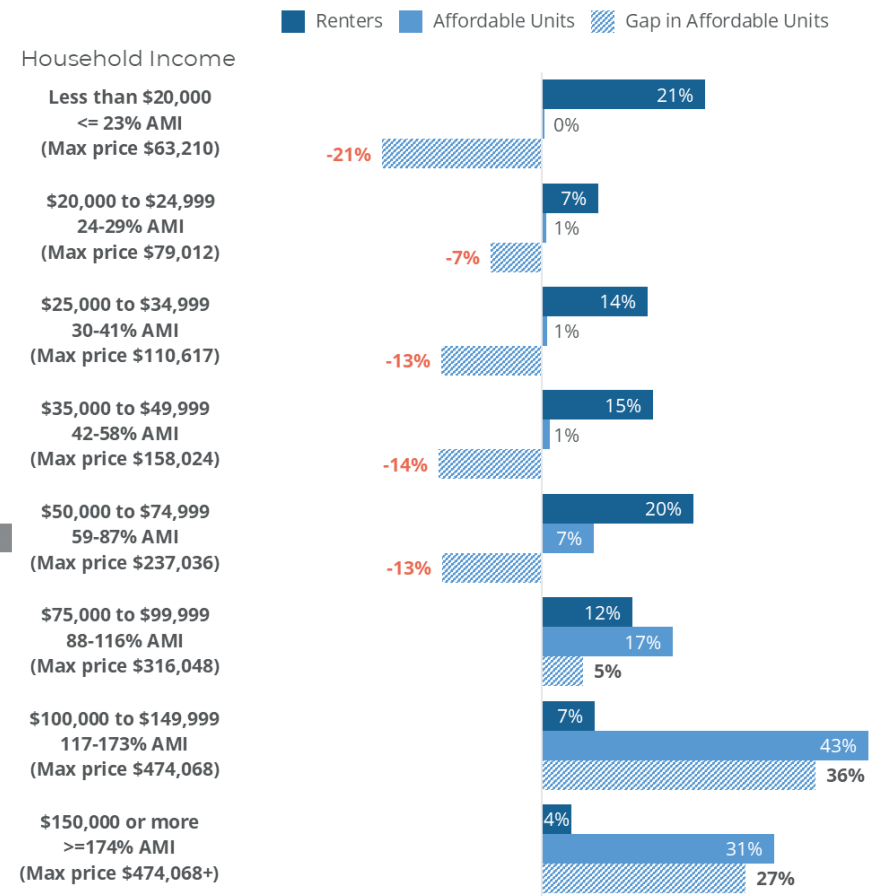
Figure 28.
For-Sale Affordability Gaps, Grand Junction, 2019



Note: Assumes a 30-year mortgage with 10% down at a 3.94% interest rate, with additional 25% of the monthly housing payment to property taxes, utilities, insurance, etc. AMI ranges presented are based on 4-person 2019 HUD AMI limits.

Source: MLS data (Bray Real Estate), 2019 5-year ACS, and Root Policy Research.

Figure 29.
For-Sale Affordability Gaps, Grand Junction, 2023-24 YTD



Note: Assumes a 30-year mortgage with 10% down at a 6.81% interest rate, with additional 25% of the monthly housing payment to property taxes, utilities, insurance, etc. AMI ranges presented are based on 4-person 2024 HUD AMI limits.

Source: MLS data (Bray Real Estate), 2022 5-year ACS, and Root Policy Research.

APPENDIX B.

Stakeholder Survey Responses



Root Policy Research

6741 E Colfax Ave, Denver, CO 80220

www.rootpolicy.com

970.880.1415

Appendix B

Grand Valley

Stakeholder Survey on Housing Strategies 2024

PREPARED FOR:

City of Grand Junction

UPDATED

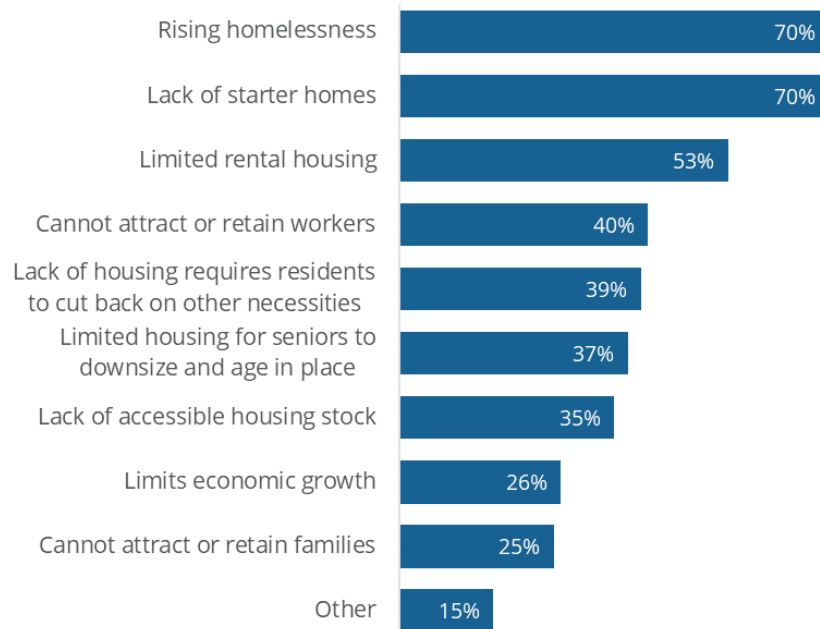
8/22/2024

This memo provides the results from the Stakeholder Survey conducted in support of Grand Junction's Housing Strategy Refresh.

APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESPONSES

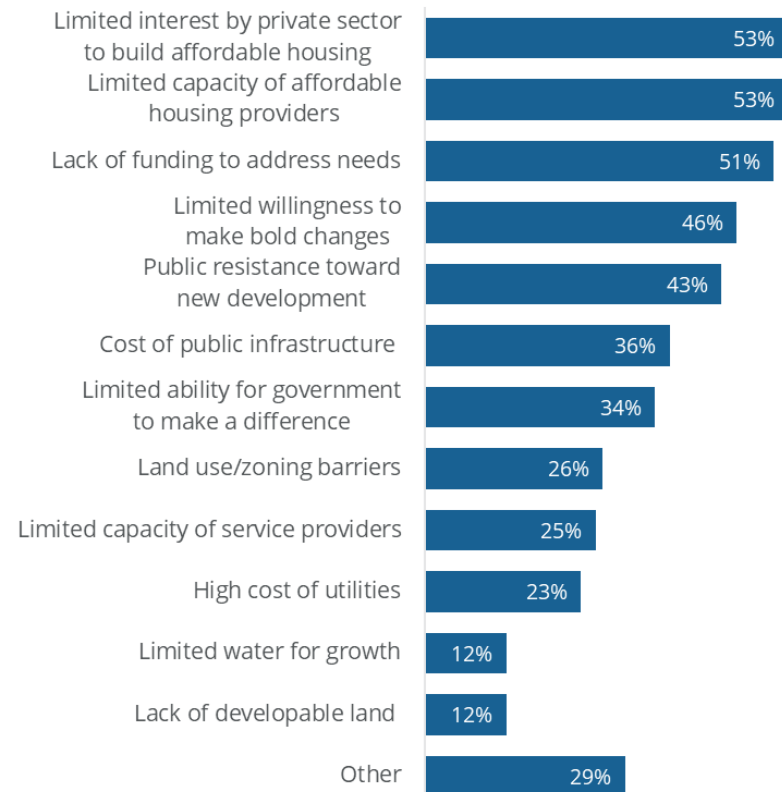
As part of the existing housing strategy review, Root surveyed local housing stakeholders including non-profit service providers, market-rate and affordable housing developers, and real estate professionals. Nearly 100 stakeholders responded and results are summarized in the following figures (response options have been shortened and paraphrased for formatting).

Figure 1. When you think about affordable housing challenges in Grand Junction, what concerns you the most? Check all that apply.



Source: 2024 Housing Strategy Stakeholder Survey.

Figure 2. In your opinion, what are the greatest barriers to addressing housing needs in your community? Check all that apply.



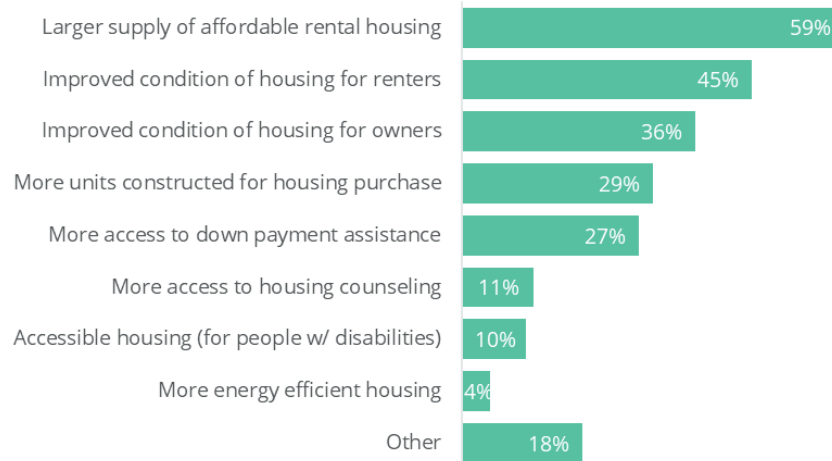
Other responses:

- General lack of affordable housing product
- Construction costs (incl. labor and materials)
- Regulatory barriers (e.g. regulatory costs/fees, lengthy/complicated process)
- Market factors (e.g. inflation, interest rate hikes)

Source: 2024 Housing Strategy Stakeholder Survey.

APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESPONSES

Figure 3. If you could pick up to 3 priority Housing outcomes from the investment of housing funds in Grand Junction, what would those be?

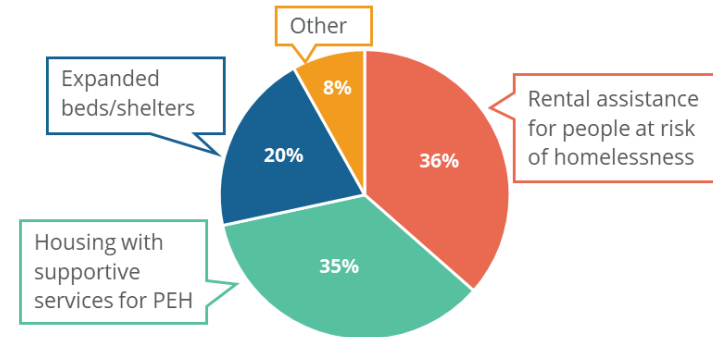


Other responses:

- Housing/service solutions for unhoused (e.g. interim housing, emergency shelter, designated camping)
- Fee assistance or fee reductions for developers
- Other incentives for developers
- Increased HUD voucher availability
- ADUs
- Greater home purchase affordability
- Options for pet ownership in multifamily units

Source: 2024 Housing Strategy Stakeholder Survey.

Figure 4. How would you prioritize the below-listed Homeless Assistance outcomes? (Top priority shown)



Source: 2024 Housing Strategy Stakeholder Survey.

APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESPONSES

Figure 5. Which existing housing strategies do you consider most important for the City to continue? (Select up to 3).

Strategy	Description	Rank	% Resp. Prioritizing
Strategy 1	Participate in regional collaboration regarding housing/houselessness needs and services.	7	17%
Strategy 2	Adopt a local affordable housing goal.	3	34%
Strategy 3	Implement land code changes that facilitate housing development.	4	33%
Strategy 4	Encourage Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Development.	10	14%
Strategy 5	Formalize existing incentives and consider additional incentives for affordable housing development.	1	40%
Strategy 6	Utilizing City owned land and/or acquire vacant or underutilized properties for Affordable and Mixed-Income Housing.	1	40%
Strategy 7	Create a dedicated funding source to address housing challenges.	5	23%
Strategy 8	Provide financial support to existing housing and houseless services and promote resident access to services.	6	21%
Strategy 9	Support acquisition/rehabilitation that creates or preserves affordable housing.	7	17%
Strategy 10	Consider implementation of an inclusionary housing/linkage fee ordinance.	13	1%
Strategy 11	Explore designation of an Urban Renewal Area (URA) and utilization of Tax Increment Financing for affordable housing.	7	17%
Strategy 12	Consider adoption of a voluntary rental registry program in conjunction with landlord incentives.	12	8%
Strategy 13	Provide community engagement and education opportunities to address housing challenges and promote community participation.	10	14%

Source: 2024 Housing Strategy Stakeholder Survey.

Are there housing programs or policies that you wish the City would explore or consider? (open ended)

- Housing-first approach
- Case management and supportive services
- Establish designated camping areas
- Develop tiny home communities
- More transitional housing
- Allow alternative occupancy arrangements (e.g., dorm-style living)
- Streamline development process
- Reduce development regulations
- Lower development fees
- Eliminate tier structure in redevelopment areas that favors big developers
- Support development of infrastructure
- Tax breaks to businesses paying livable wages
- Subsidize entry-level housing
- Develop mobile home parks and support resident ownership of parks
- Remove city fees on <80% AMI
- Public/private partnerships
- Modular housing
- Increase availability of vouchers

Source: 2024 Housing Strategy Stakeholder Survey



HOUSING

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



CITY OF
Grand Junction
COLORADO

Housing & Houselessness as a City Priority

Grand Junction's 2020 Comprehensive Plan serves as a blueprint for the city, with its foundation resting on the community's vision for the future. This vision provides guidance for the formulation of goals, strategies, and overall development in Grand Junction.

The Strategic Plan, updated every two years, integrates the priorities identified as most crucial by the City Council into the broader framework of city planning and development.



Comprehensive Plan Principle 5: Strong Neighborhoods and Housing Choice

1. Promote more opportunities for housing choices that meet the needs of people of all ages, abilities, and incomes
2. Partner in developing housing strategies for the community.
3. Support continued investment in and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and amenities in established neighborhoods.
4. Promote the integration of transportation mode choices into existing and new neighborhoods.
5. Foster the development of neighborhoods where people of all ages, incomes and backgrounds live together and share a feeling of community.

Award Recipient

The City of Grand Junction's Housing Division received the 2023 Mary J. Nelson Inspirational Award from United Way of Mesa County for their outstanding work in implementation of housing initiatives and community education efforts.

2023-2025 City Council Strategic Outcome: Welcoming, Livable, Engaging

Grand Junction fosters a sense of belonging, where people are accepted as themselves and have access to the amenities and services they need to thrive, and actively seeks participation from our community.

Vision

The City of Grand Junction is committed to enacting housing policies and partnering with outside organizations that seek to increase affordable housing options, diversify housing choice, decrease the gap between need and housing inventory, and assist those without homes to access supportive and housing services.

Housing Strategy

The Grand Junction Housing Strategy was formally adopted by City Council in 2021 which included twelve housing strategies for implementation to increase housing options, affordability, and increase access to services. In 2022, the City adopted a thirteenth housing strategy focused on community engagement and education. In 2024, City Council adopted the Housing Strategy Update 2024, which includes eleven strategies, reflecting a continuation of previous strategies or modifications to the original strategy and introduces some new approaches identified as funding, best practices, and regulations in housing evolve.

Housing Division Overview

The Housing Division was launched in 2022 following the adoption of the City of Grand Junction Housing Strategy. The Housing Division has grown to three full time staff and has supported a Colorado Mesa University intern, Bachelor of Social Work student, and two AmeriCorps Hometown Fellows.

Funding

From 2022 to its adopted 2024 budget, the City has committed \$19 million in housing and houseless needs. This funding encompasses capital projects, operational support for service providers, emergency assistance during COVID, funding for housing and homeless projects, matching and securing grants for housing initiatives, and actively expanding the City's role in addressing housing and houselessness issues.

Unhoused Strategy

Adopted by City Council in July 2024, the Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan provides a community-wide approach to addressing homelessness in Grand Junction, recognizing that the City cannot be the sole implementer. With a focus on Functional Zero, the plan relies on cross-sector partnerships and a nine-workgroup Implementation Action Team to drive progress.

City of Grand Junction Summary of Housing/Unhoused Funding



In 2024, the City of Grand Junction committed approximately \$10.6 million toward housing and unhoused initiatives. This investment is supporting the construction of at least 131 housing units currently underway and has helped lay the foundation for the future development of an estimated 700 additional affordable units in the community. In addition to new development, these funds have provided critical operational support and capital improvements for local housing and homelessness service partners. The City has also carried forward its \$8.3 million Private Activity Bond (PAB) allocation from 2023 and 2024 for future housing initiatives and remains optimistic that a qualifying rental housing project will emerge. The City's approved 2025 budget (adopted in December 2024) includes approximately \$3.9 million in additional funding for these efforts. Altogether, including funding and grants from 2004 to 2023, the City has invested over \$40 million in housing and homelessness initiatives.

2024 City of Grand Junction Direct Funding & Grants

<i>Nonprofit Funding</i>		<i>Capital Projects & Incentives</i>	
Housing Resources of Western Co	\$87,000	GJ Housing Authority - The Current	
Karis, Inc.	\$13,200	(Gap Funding & Impact Fee)	\$2,257,184
Habitat for Humanity	\$99,014	GV Catholic - Impact Fee	\$200,00
Mutual Aid Partners	\$50,000	Housing Resources - Homeownership	\$100,000
Homeward Bound North Ave Operation	<u>\$225,000</u>	ADU Incentive Program	\$298,971
Total Non-profit	\$474,214	Resource Center - Operations	\$425,107
<i>Housing Strategy Implementation</i>		Salt Flats Project - Acquisition (\$2.2m grant)	\$3,200,000
Housing Division Administration	\$350,343	Salt Flats -Infrastructure (\$2m grant)	<u>\$2,800,000</u>
Affordable Housing Consultant	\$50,000	Total Capital Projects & Incentives	\$9,281,262
Housing Strategy Update	\$80,000	<i>2023-2024 CDBG</i>	
Unhoused Strategy Implementation	\$50,000	Habitat for Humanity-Hoffman Sewer	\$68,000
At Home in GJ Program	\$90,000	GV Catholic Outreach - Sewer Tap	<u>\$96,748</u>
Neighbor 2 Neighbor/Outreach	\$10,000	Total CDBG	\$164,748
DOLA - Planning Grant	\$63,225	<i>Available for Future Investment</i>	
Other	<u>\$23,710</u>	<i>Private Activity Bond</i>	
Total Housing Strategy	\$717,278	2023 Allocation - Carryforward Rental	\$4,031,651
		2024 Allocation - Carryforward Rental	<u>\$4,256,193</u>
			\$8,287,844

2004-2023 Total Direct Funding & Grants	\$18,081,620
2024 Total Direct Funding & Grants	\$10,637,502
Available for Future Investment (PAB)	\$8,287,844
+ 2025 Approved Budget	\$3,942,124
Total Direct Funding & Grants	\$40,949,090

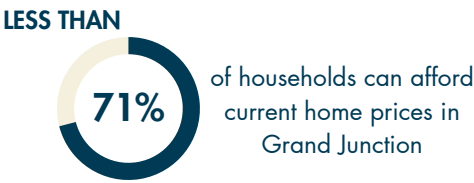
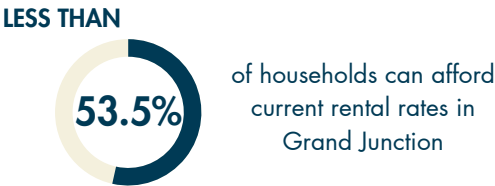
Mesa County real estate data shows a more stable market, with a 7.3% growth in total sales volume from 2023 to 2024 and a 1.4% increase in homes sold. As of December 2024, the average interest rate was 6.72%. The median home price reached \$400,000, reflecting a 7.3% increase from 2023. While the market seems to have stabilized and we are only seeing smaller increases in prices, affordability (purchasing power) has dropped due to high interest rates. 42% of homes sold in 2021 were affordable to 80% AMI to just 9% in 2024. Newly constructed homes remain unaffordable to households below 140% AMI.

Rental rates in 2024 remained consistent with those in 2023. While median renter incomes kept pace with rising rents, an affordability gap persists for low-income renters, and vacancy rates remain extremely low at 3.1%. Since 2019, home prices have surged by more than 67.45%, while rental costs have increased by 44%.

The rental market saw a decline in lower-priced units (under \$800 per month) and an increase in units priced above \$1,500 per month. Over this period, the median household income rose modestly by 4.95%, from \$63,531 in 2021 to \$66,676 in 2023. This highlights a concerning trend: the cost of housing has outpaced wage growth, with the average rent-to-income ratio approaching the cost-burdened threshold of 30%.

A Snapshot of Local Housing Data

MEDIAN RENT: \$1500
44% INCREASE SINCE 2019
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$400,000*
67.45% INCREASE SINCE 2019
*NUMBERS ARE AS OF DECEMBER 2024



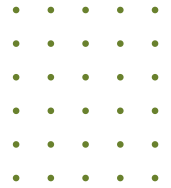
Housing Affordability

2024 Mesa County AMI

			1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person	6 Person
Social Security Income (up to \$943/mo. or \$11,316/yr. for individual) CO Min. Wage (\$14.42/hr)	30% AMI	Income	\$19,800	\$22,620	\$25,440	\$28,260	\$30,540	\$32,790
		(hourly)	(\$9.52)	(\$10.88)	(\$12.23)	(\$13.59)	(\$14.68)	(\$15.76)
		Affordable Rent	\$495	\$566	\$636	\$707	\$764	\$820
		Affordable Home Price	\$65,262	\$74,557	\$83,852	\$93,147	\$100,662	\$108,078
Food service, Healthcare Assistance, Daycare Providers, Teacher's Aides	50% AMI	Income	\$33,000	\$37,700	\$42,400	\$47,100	\$50,900	\$54,650
		(hourly)	(\$15.87)	(\$18.13)	(\$20.38)	(\$22.64)	(\$24.47)	(\$26.27)
		Affordable Rent	\$825	\$943	\$1,060	\$1,178	\$1,273	\$1,366
		Affordable Home Price	\$108,770	\$124,261	\$139,753	\$155,244	\$167,769	\$180,130
Agriculture, Sales/Retail, EMTs	60% AMI	Income	\$39,600	\$45,240	\$50,880	\$56,520	\$61,080	\$65,580
		(hourly)	(\$19.04)	(\$21.75)	(\$24.46)	(\$27.17)	(\$29.37)	(\$31.53)
		Affordable Rent	\$990	\$1,131	\$1,272	\$1,413	\$1,527	\$1,640
		Affordable Home Price	\$130,524	\$149,114	\$167,703	\$186,293	\$201,323	\$216,156
Teachers, Social Services, Firefighters, Construction	80% AMI	Income	\$52,800	\$60,320	\$67,840	\$75,360	\$81,440	\$87,440
		(hourly)	(\$25.38)	(\$29.00)	(\$32.62)	(\$36.23)	(\$39.15)	(\$42.04)
		Affordable Rent	\$1,320	\$1,508	\$1,696	\$1,884	\$2,036	\$2,186
		Affordable Home Price	\$174,032	\$198,818	\$223,605	\$248,391	\$268,431	\$288,207
Nurses, Police Officers	100% AMI	Income	\$66,000	\$75,400	\$84,800	\$94,200	\$101,800	\$109,300
		Affordable Rent	\$1,650	\$1,885	\$2,120	\$2,355	\$2,545	\$2,733
		Affordable Home Price	\$217,540	\$248,523	\$279,506	\$310,489	\$335,539	\$360,259
Engineers, Legal, Management	120% AMI	Income	\$79,200	\$90,480	\$101,760	\$113,040	\$122,160	\$131,160
		Affordable Rent	\$1,980	\$2,262	\$2,544	\$2,826	\$3,054	\$3,279
		Affordable Home Price	\$261,048	\$298,227	\$335,407	\$372,586	\$402,647	\$432,311



Affordable/Attainable Housing Production



PROP 123

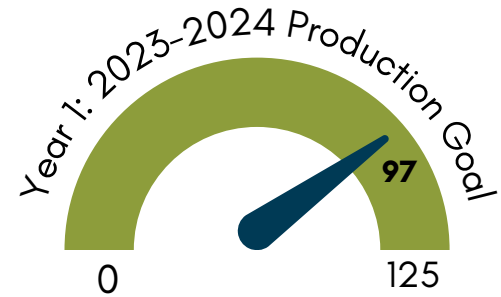
Proposition 123 was approved by Colorado voters in 2022, and made available approximately \$300 million in affordable housing funding to non-profit agencies, land trusts, for profit and nonprofit developers, and local governments to apply for funding. To be eligible, jurisdictions must make a commitment to increasing affordable housing by 9% over a 3 year term.

For Proposition 123, municipalities must track affordable housing production. **Further guidance on official counting of units will be available in 2025.** Proposition 123 defines Affordable Housing as:

- Funded by the Prop 123 Concessionary Debt Program, Equity or Landbanking program. *some programs allow for AMI income averaging IF it complies with program
- Housing that costs no more than 30% of a households income
- Rental units affordable to households earning less than 60% AMI
- For-Sale units affordable to households earning less than 100% AMI

City Housing Production Goal:

The City's Housing Production Goal (as adopted by Resolution 48-22 and adjusted by Prop 123 alignment in Resolutions 64-23 and 65-23) is to: Increase affordable housing stock by 9% over three years (374 units) or approximately 125 units annually by December 31, 2026.



177%
ANNUAL INCREASE

In Year 1 (2023-2024), the City anticipates producing 97 affordable housing units toward its cumulative 374-unit production goal, representing a 177% increase from the historical annual production of 35 units. While the City was on track to meet its 2024 goal, permitting delays have shifted 54 units to January 2025. For Year 2 (2024-2025), projections estimate an additional 80-155 permitted units. Finalized production counts for 2024 are anticipated to be available by June 2025, pending final guidance on unit counting.

AMI Serving			2023-2024						
Housing Type	Permanent Supportive Housing	less than 30%AMI	40						40
	Affordable Rental Units	Less than 60% AMI							0
	Attainable Rental Units	between 60-80% AMI							0
	Affordable Homeownership Units	Less than 100% AMI			8				8
	Attainable Homeownership Units	Between 100-120% AMI				39	5		44
	Prop 123: Concessionary Debt/Equity Financing	depends on project							
	Preservation of Units	depends on project		4					4
	Naturally Occurring	depends on project							
	Other: ADU Production Program	N/A						1	1
Developer			Mother Theresa, Catholic Outreach	Domestic Violence Transitional Housing, Hilltop Family Resources	Habitat for Humanity *less than 80% AMI	Downpayment Assistance, Housing Resource of Western CO	Meridian Park Townhomes, Housing Resources of Western Co	ADU Production Program	97



Housing Strategies & Implementation

The City of Grand Junction partnered with Root Policy Research in 2019 to conduct the Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment, which informed the creation of the City's Housing Strategy. Adopted in 2021 with 12 strategies to expand housing options and affordability, a 13th strategy focused on community engagement was added in 2022. In 2024, City Council adopted the Housing Strategy Update, refining previous strategies and incorporating new approaches based on funding and best practices.

Strategy 1 | Continue to Implement land use code changes that facilitate attainable housing development and housing diversity.

Interim Housing Code

City Council adopted Ordinance No. 5229, on August 29, 2024, which created the zoning and land use regulations (guidelines) for interim housing sites to develop within the community. Interim housing is a temporary structure that could provide shelter while longer-term solutions, such as permanent housing to be developed. To date, there have not been any interim shelter sites developed within the city.

Other Land Use Code Updates:

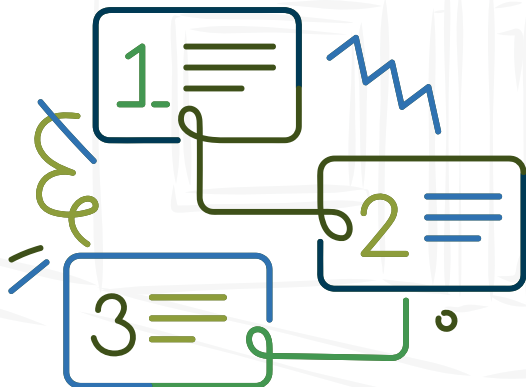
In 2024, the City adopted approximately 40 revisions to the City's Land Use Code. Some of the key changes included:

- Allowed ADUs to be in the front or side yard on a corner lot, making them easier to locate on a property.
- Allowed P-2 properties to be subdivided
- Allowed duplexes and cottage courts to be permissible in P-2 zones.
- Removed setbacks for residential uses in MU-3 zones to relay on standard setbacks for all uses, which are 0 ft.

Expedited Review Process & Study

In 2022, the City adopted Resolution 97-22 to expedite review for projects with at least 10% affordable units. Proposition 123 requires all governments to establish a 90-day review process for affordable housing by 2026 which will expand upon the City's expedited review process.

To prepare for these changes and to increase overall efficiency, the City launched a study in 2024 to evaluate and streamline the development review process, optimize processes, and enhance customer service. The study will assess each phase—from pre-application to project closeout—identifying challenges, staffing needs, and opportunities to improve workflows. A key focus is expediting approvals for affordable housing while ensuring timely reviews for all developments. The study is expected to be completed in 2025.



Strategy 2 | Explore new incentives for affordable and/or attainable housing development

Affordable Housing Incentive

Per state statute, housing authorities are exempt from paying government impact fees; however, in 2024, City Council determined to backfill these waivers with general fund amounts. Additionally, on July 3, 2024, the City of Grand Junction adopted Resolution 44-24, creating an Affordable Housing Incentive Program to encourage other for-profit and non-profit developers to build affordable housing. In exchange for fee waivers, developers must commit to long-term affordability. Funding for the program is contingent on the annual budget, and applicants are required to submit a letter of request. The 2024 application period closed on August 25, with City Council approving \$200,578 for selected projects, which will be expended in 2025.

Grand Junction Housing Authority – The Current \$2,257,184 – Approved



Through the 2024 housing budget, the City committed \$1.5 million to the capital stack and provided \$747,184 in funds to backfill the state exemption of city impact fees for GJHA's project, "The Current." This 54-unit first phase is part of a larger plan to develop 300+ units on a 15-acre parcel, acquired with a City grant match (2022) and a DOLA grant. "The Current" will provide one- and two-bedroom apartments at or below 60% AMI, targeting workforce families.

More Housing Now Grant – \$1,000,000 – Pending

On November 20, 2024, City Council approved Resolution 82-24 to apply for a \$1 million grant from the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) More Housing Now Grant to support infrastructure

development for "The Current," the first phase of the Centennial Park development by the Grand Junction Housing Authority. The grant requires a 25% match of \$501,031, which will be allocated from the \$1.5 million previously approved by City Council through Resolution 07-24. The City anticipates notifications to be received in early 2025.

Housing Resources of Western Colorado – The Row Homes at Meridian Park – \$100,000

In April 2024, City Council approved Resolution 20-24, which amended Resolutions 20-23 and 39-23, and authorized a second grant award of \$100,000 from the 2024 housing budget to Housing Resources of Western Colorado (HRWC) for the Row Homes at Meridian Park affordable housing project. The funding will support the development of 10 affordable townhomes for households earning 80-120% of AMI. Additionally, the amendment allowed HRWC/Com Act to utilize \$250,000 in City ARPA grant funds (awarded in 2023) will provide down payment assistance, recaptured as loans at closing.



Aspire, LLC – Liberty Ridge – \$885,541 – Conditionally Approved

In December 2024, City Council conditionally approved \$885,541 in 2025 budget funding for the Liberty Ridge Apartments, a 192-unit apartment complex located at 2651 Stacy Drive in Orchard Mesa, contingent on the developer receiving a favorable application for Proposition 123 funding, thus counting for the City's Prop 123 commitment. The developer plans to construct the units in two phases, with 72 units scheduled for completion by June 2026 and 120 units by April 2028.

The developer intends to utilize either the Proposition 123 Equity Program or Concessionary Debt. These programs require the following:

- Prop. 123 Equity: Rental rates at an average of 90% AMI for all units for a period of 30 years.
- Prop. 123 Concessionary Debt: 20% of units (38 units) at 80% AMI for a period of 30 years.

Strategy 3 | Leverage city owned land and/or strategically acquire land for affordable and mixed-income housing.

City of Grand Junction – Salt Flats Project \$1,800,000 (City Match)

Through Resolution 67-24, City Council approved the acquisition of 21.78 acres at 450 28 Road, known as the Salt Flats, to support the development of affordable and attainable housing. The site will facilitate the creation of between 324 and 500 housing units, with a minimum of 70% of the units designated as deed-restricted affordable housing with 30% that may be allocated to market-rate or attainable housing, commercial or other mixed use opportunities that align with the project outcomes and goals. This project will help address the need for affordable housing in the community and will include both rental and for-sale units targeted to households at or below 60% AMI for rentals and 100% AMI for homeownership. The project will support various housing types through strategic partnerships with non-profit and for-profit housing providers. A Request for Letters of Intent is expected to be issued to developers in early 2025, following the property closing.



Acquisition – Proposition 123 Landbanking Grant – \$2,200,000 – Awarded

In January 2024, the City received notification of a \$2.2 million Colorado State of Colorado's OEDIT Prop 123 Landbanking Grant for the acquisition of the Salt Flats. The City utilized \$1 million from the 2023 Housing Budget as a match for the \$3.2 million acquisition. Closing on the property is anticipated in early January 2025.

Infrastructure – More Housing Now – \$2,000,000 – Awarded

In December 2024, the City received notification of a \$2 million More Housing Now Grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to support the first phase of infrastructure development for the Salt Flats project. This funding, along with a grant match contributed by the seller at closing, will be used to develop essential infrastructure, including streets, street widening, utilities, sidewalks, and water, to prepare the site for the construction of 324 to 500 housing units. Infrastructure development is anticipated to begin in early 2025.



Strategy 4 | Create a dedicated funding source to address housing challenges.

The City currently does not have a dedicated funding source for affordable housing and continues to allocate funds through the general fund, which competes with other programs. However, the City strategically leverages these general fund allocations for additional grant matches, maximizing resources and enabling further funding through various grants and opportunities to support housing initiatives. These allocations and opportunities are detailed throughout this report under specific strategies.

Strategy 5 | Continue / expand funding for existing housing and homelessness services.



Private Activity Bond (PAB) – 2023 Allocation & 2024 Allocation \$8,234,844

Each year the State of Colorado allocates tax-exempt Private Activity Bond directly to local governments for the sole purpose of financing qualified projects including affordable housing. In years past, the City has utilized the fund to support entities like the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) or return the balance to the state. In 2023 and 2024, having no affordable housing projects, City Council approved to carry forward the allocation for three years until a qualified affordable housing project that aligns with the City's goals has made a request.

Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan

The Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan was formally adopted by City Council on July 3, 2024 through Resolution 49-24. The Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan is a community-wide plan that builds upon the research conducted by JG Research in the Unhoused Needs Assessment(2023). It enhances the initial findings outlined in the Unhoused Strategy Report (2023), transforming them into a comprehensive community-wide plan. The plan is aimed at addressing critical gaps and meeting the immediate needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in the Grand Junction area and aligning with the overarching community objective of achieving Functional Zero. A comprehensive report on the City's role in implementing the 2024 adopted Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan is expected in early spring 2025. Therefore, this section of the Housing Report will highlight select projects.



Neighbor-to-Neighbor Referral Team

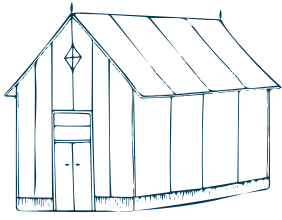


The Neighbor-to-Neighbor Referral Team was launched in 2023 as a response to the needs observed during outreach to unhoused camps along the river. City staff, in partnership with local providers, provided harm reduction supplies and identified a lack of real-time referral services in those spaces. Since then, the team has expanded to include professionals from mental/behavioral health providers, case managers, medical staff, and housing navigators. Homeward Bound secured a state grant to fund additional outreach and medical services in collaboration with the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Team.

Unhoused Efforts funded in 2024:

Mother Teresa Place, Grand Valley Catholic Outreach – \$200,000

The project will include 40 one-bedroom units of permanent supportive housing for most at-risk individuals experiencing houselessness and facing physical or behavioral health challenges. Wrap-around services will be provided by GVCO to ensure housing stability for these individuals. The City also contributed \$1.5 million in ARPA funding (2023) and donated land (2022) for this project. Mother Theresa Place is anticipated to open in early 2025.



The Resource Center, Homeward Bound of the Grand Valley & United Way of Mesa County – \$425,107

The Resource Center fully launched on January 30, 2024 after only 5 weeks between approval from City Council and opening its doors. In 2023, \$912,400 was provided for the capital expenditures of the facility which included site construction, pavilion, bathroom truck, fencing, security measures, heating units, windows, and all the key infrastructure components. In 2024, the site became operational and went through many challenges, changes and opportunities. The Center served the community as a low barrier facility that provided access to meals, services, support, housing navigation, and sanitation services. In November 2024, City Council voted to terminate the lease agreement a year early and requested staff and service providers to make a transition plan for services.

Non-profit Funding

City Council has a longstanding tradition of supporting non-profit organizations within the community. Annually, these organizations have the opportunity to submit requests for consideration in the budget allocation process. In 2024, \$474,214 was allocated to the non-profit funding cycle.

2024 Non-profit funding totaling \$474,214 for projects related to housing and houselessness included:

- Housing Resources of Western Co – \$72,000
- Housing Resources of Western Co – \$15,000
- Karis, Inc. – \$13,200
- Habitat for Humanity – \$99,014
- Mutual Aid Partners – \$50,000
- Operational Funding for Emergency Shelter, Homeward Bound of the Grand Valley – \$225,000

Strategy 6 | Support preservation of existing housing that serves low- and moderate-income households.

Griffin RiverView Mobile Home Park – Outreach, *Pending*

The Colorado Mobile Home Park Act and Oversight Program Rules ensure transparency in mobile home park sales, granting residents a 90-day window to organize and submit a purchase offer or assign it to a nonprofit or government entity. In September, the City was notified of the potential sale of Griffin River View Mobile Home Park, a 3.1-acre property with 41 spaces, 39 of which are occupied. The owner changed the price in November 2024 giving an additional 120 day window (March 2025) to make an offer. Housing Resources of Western Colorado, City Housing Staff and Thistle ROC are working with residents to inform them of their rights and guide them through the process of organizing, funding, and potentially purchasing the park to prevent displacement and preserve affordable housing.

Down Payment Assistance Fund, Housing Resources of Western Colorado – 39 loans

In 2023, Housing Resources of Western Colorado was awarded \$1,000,000 to create a down payment assistance (DPA) revolving loan fund, providing 0% interest loans of \$25,000 to approximately 40 low-income households. These loans have no monthly payments and are recaptured upon refinancing or sale of the home. In 2024, HRWC funded 39 DPA loans homes/households, enabling home purchases and contributing to Prop 123's unit production goals.

Strategy 7 | Evaluate inclusionary housing and/or a linkage fee ordinance

The Grand Junction Municipal Code requires the City to update its impact fee study once every five years. The City's last fee study for transportation, police, fire, parks, and municipal facilities was completed in 2019. The City has contracted with TischlerBise to update its fee study and create a nexus study for an affordable housing linkage fee. Representatives from TischlerBise will provide an update on the progress of the impact fee study, including the preliminary fees for transportation and parks and parkland. The study's Affordable Housing Linkage Fee recommendations are anticipated in early 2025.

Strategy 8 | Explore designation of an Urban Renewal Area (URA) and utilization of Tax Increment Financing for affordable housing.

Recommended timeline for implementation 2-4 years; no update at this time

Strategy 9 | Provide community engagement and education opportunities to address housing challenges and promote community participation.

Throughout 2024, City staff participated in a number of efforts including:

- New Dimensions Class - Staff co-taught "Home for All: A Conversation about Housing in the Grand Valley" and "United to Solve Homelessness: A Look at Homelessness in the Grand Valley". Each class had maximum participation of 40 individuals.
- By invitation, staff spoke at numerous local clubs, service organizations, community groups, churches, and schools about housing and homelessness.
- Hosted multiple Interim Housing community feedback sessions, local engagement sessions on the unhoused, and on housing issues.
- Staff served as a panel on ADU zoning and production program and Interim Housing Code development at the American Planning Association Colorado Conference and at the Housing Colorado Conference

United To Solve Homelessness, Poverty Immersion Experience

In 2024, United Way of Mesa County, The City of Grand Junction and several service partners collaborated together to create a community-based education workshop and immersive experience to help raise awareness, inspire solutions, and help solve the issue of homelessness. In 2024, three Poverty Immersion Experiences were facilitated with a total of 139 participants, along with three General Insight Sessions (formerly known as "workshops") attended by 82 participants.

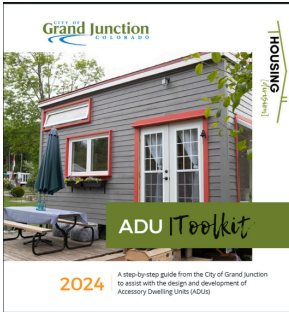
Feedback Sessions

In 2024, the City hosted over 20 meetings with local constituents, service providers, and community groups to talk about housing, homelessness and work towards finding solutions.

Strategy 10 | Support legislative efforts at the state level to improve housing outcomes

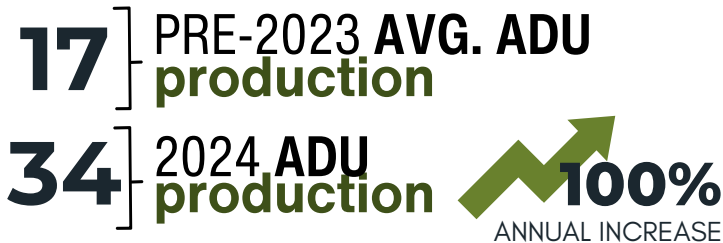
New strategy in late 2024; state legislature was out of session. Staff participated in State of Colorado Division of Housing feedback sessions on development of the Prop 123 unit count methodology and guidelines and the implementation of HB24-1152 which created new legislation around ADU code requirements and grant opportunities for ADU supportive jurisdictions.

Strategy 11 | Monitor goal progress and project outcomes.



ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit) Production Program - \$298,971

Building on progress made in 2023, the City further expanded its ADU Production Program and resources in 2024. Key milestones included hosting 155 participants across nine workshops—highlighted by the launch of ADU Workshop Part 2, featuring a panel of experts in county permitting, construction, and financing. The City saw a 100% increase in ADU production, with 21 of 34 approved ADUs receiving incentives. In November, the City partnered with CMU Tech for an ADU Design Challenge, awarding \$4,750 in scholarships—matched by the CMU Foundation for a total of \$9,500—with winning plans to be developed into design templates to support citywide ADU development.



ADU Incentive Program

2024

- 21 - Total (NEW)
- 19 - Tier 1
- 2 - Tier 2
- 1- Additional Incentive (cont from 23)

Total: \$254,789.75
Budgeted: \$298,971



CMU Students receive awards at City Council Meeting

At Home in GJ Landlord & Tenant Program

Launched late in 2024, the At Home in GJ Program is a pilot initiative designed to support housing stability through landlord engagement and education for both landlords and tenants. The program aims to expand access to safe, stable rental housing by strengthening connections between property owners, tenants, and available resources.

Landlord Education & Incentive Program - \$85,000

A key component of the program is the Landlord Incentive Program, which offers financial incentives to property owners who rent to tenants experiencing barriers to housing—such as poor credit, prior evictions, or unstable income. Incentives include a \$300 signing bonus for entering into a one-year lease with an income-qualified tenant, as well as up to \$2,500 in mitigation funds to cover costs such as damages beyond normal wear and tear, lost rent due to early lease termination, court filing fees, or necessary cleaning and repairs to prepare the unit for re-rental. Additionally, the City partnered with the Grand Junction Housing Authority to co-host the 2024 Landlord Symposium, which brought together over 150 local landlords to learn about new legislation, tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities, and emerging housing initiatives across the community.

Rentsmart - Tenant Education -\$10,000

In addition, the RentSmart Tenant Education Program was introduced to equip renters with knowledge and tools to be successful tenants. In 2024, the City hosted six RentSmart classes, reaching approximately 30 participants. These sessions covered topics such as budgeting, lease agreements, tenant rights and responsibilities, and effective communication with landlords.



Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) aimed at supporting local community development efforts. CDBG funds are allocated to eligible cities and counties to address a range of community needs, including affordable housing, infrastructure development, and economic revitalization. These grants are intended to enhance the quality of life for low and moderate-income individuals and communities, promoting sustainable development, job creation, and improved living conditions. Local governments use CDBG funds strategically to address specific challenges and foster comprehensive community development initiatives. In the 2023-2024 program year, the City of Grand Junction received an allocation of \$388,985.

For the 2023 Program Year (Sept 2023-Aug 2024) projects included:

- CDBG-CV: Foreclosure Prevention Relief (Covid Relief Funds)
- CDBG-CV Rental Assistance/Relief (Covid Relief Funds)
- Housing Resources of Western Co - Critical Home Repair (2021 & 2022 allocations)
- Housing Resources of Western Colorado - Housing Stability, Counseling & Support (2022 allocation)
- Counseling & Education Center - Low Income Counseling
- Safe to School Route - Rocket Park Crosswalk
- Grand Valley Catholic Outreach - Mother Teresa Place Pre-Construction (2023)

Projects that will continue into the next program year:

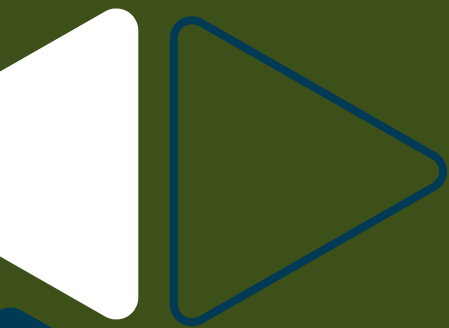
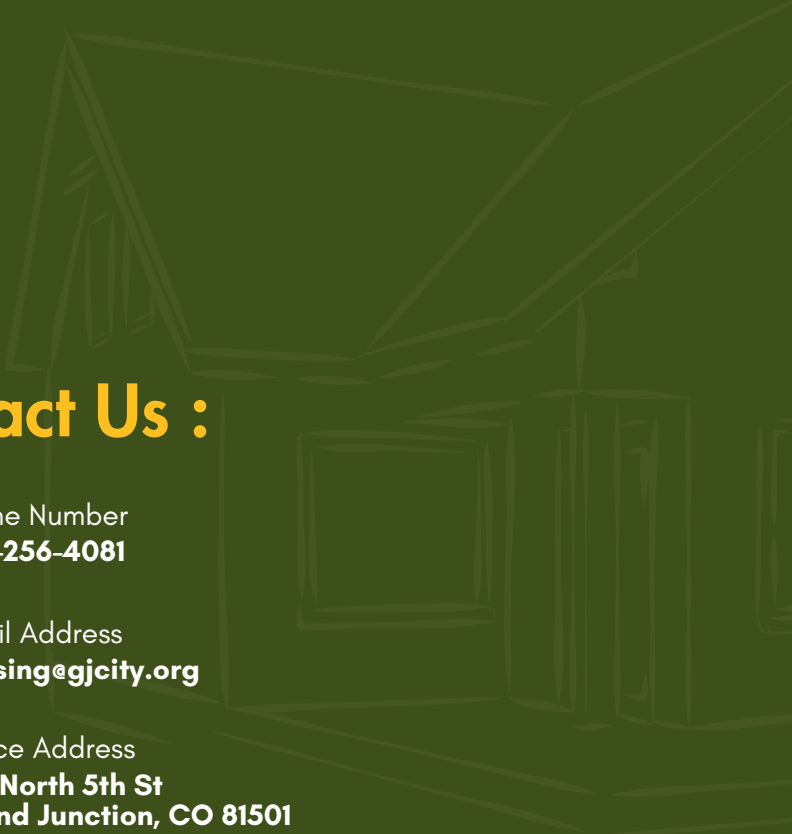
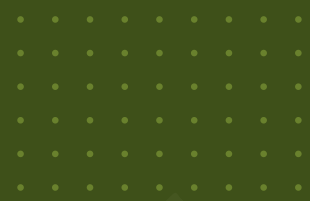
- 27 Road from Unaweeep to B.75 Road Safe Neighborhood Route (2021)
- Safe Neighborhood Route - 27 Road South of Hwy 50 (2022)
- 2023 Program Administration
- Habitat for Humanity of Mesa County - Hoffman pre-development Costs (2023)

2023 Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER)

The CAPER is an end of Program Year report required by HUD and an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments achieved with CDBG funding. To view the 2023 CAPER, please visit <https://www.gjcity.org/344/Community-Development-Block-Grant-CDBG>

2021-2025 Five-Year Consolidated Plan

To be eligible for CDBG funds, every five years the City is required to adopt a Five-Year Consolidated Plan that sets forth goals and priorities for expenditure of funds in the community. To view the Five-Year Consolidated Plan please visit <https://www.gjcity.org/344/Community-Development-Block-Grant-CDBG>



Contact Us :



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**250 North 5th St
Grand Junction, CO 81501**



HOUSING

ANNUAL REPORT

2023



Housing & Houselessness as a City Priority

Grand Junction's 2020 Comprehensive Plan serves as a blueprint for the city, with its foundation resting on the community's vision for the future. This vision provides guidance for the formulation of goals, strategies, and overall development in Grand Junction.

The Strategic Plan, updated every two years, integrates the priorities identified as most crucial by the City Council into the broader framework of city planning and development.



Comprehensive Plan Principle 5: Strong Neighborhoods and Housing Choice

1. Promote more opportunities for housing choices that meet the needs of people of all ages, abilities, and incomes
2. Partner in developing housing strategies for the community.
3. Support continued investment in and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and amenities in established neighborhoods.
4. Promote the integration of transportation mode choices into existing and new neighborhoods.
5. Foster the development of neighborhoods where people of all ages, incomes and backgrounds live together and share a feeling of community.

2023-2025 City Council Strategic Outcome: Welcoming, Livable, Engaging

Grand Junction fosters a sense of belonging, where people are accepted as themselves and have access to the amenities and services they need to thrive, and actively seeks participation from our community.

Grand Junction Housing Strategy

The Grand Junction Housing Strategy was formally adopted by City Council in 2021 which included twelve housing strategies for implementation to increase housing options, affordability, and increase access to services. In 2022, the City adopted a thirteenth housing strategy focused on community engagement and education.

Vision

The City of Grand Junction is committed to enacting housing policies and partnering with outside organizations that seek to increase affordable housing options, diversify housing choice, decrease the gap between need and housing inventory, and assist those without homes to access supportive and housing services.

Housing Division Overview

The Housing Division was launched in 2022 following the adoption of the City of Grand Junction Housing Strategy. The Housing Division has grown to three full time staff and has supported a Colorado Mesa University intern, Bachelor of Social Work student, and a Americorp Hometown Fellow.

Funding

In the last two years, the City has committed \$19 million in housing and houseless needs. This funding encompasses capital projects, operational support for service providers, emergency assistance during COVID, funding for housing and homeless projects, matching and securing grants for housing initiatives, and actively expanding the City's role in addressing housing and houselessness issues.

Award Recipient

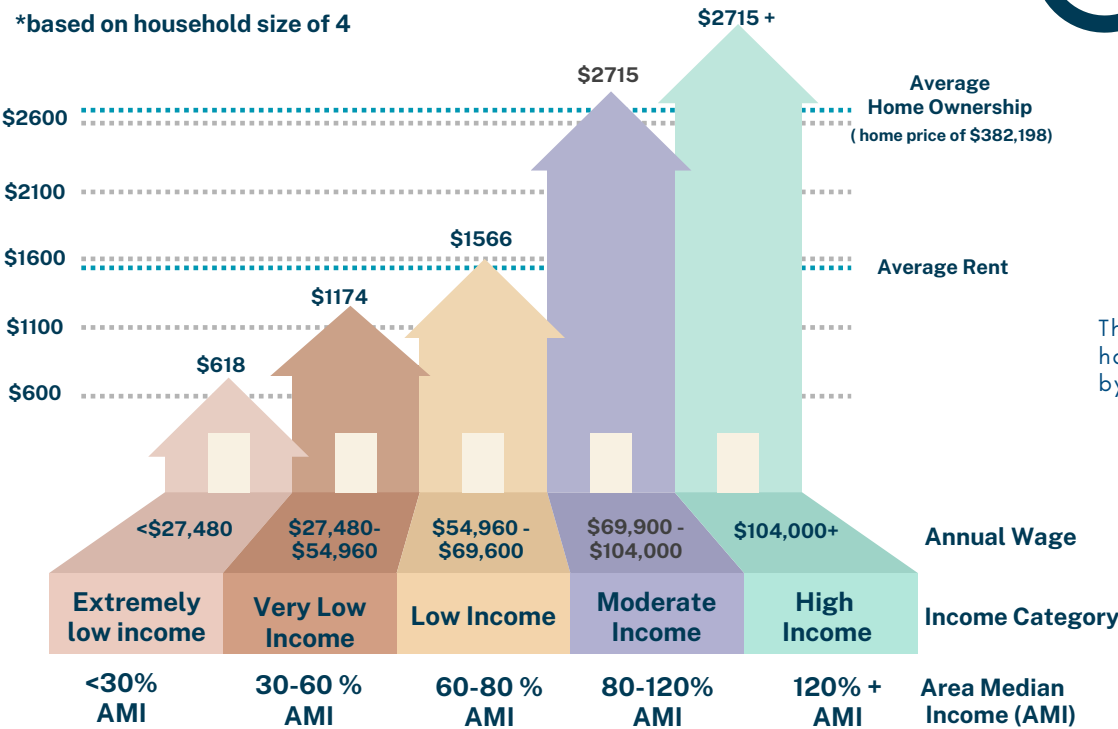
The City of Grand Junction's Housing Division received the 2023 Mary J. Nelson Inspirational Award from United Way of Mesa County for their outstanding work in implementation of housing initiatives and community education efforts.

Overall, Mesa County real estate data indicates a slowdown in the housing market due to the impact of rising interest rates and construction costs. As of December 2023, interest rates averaged 6.89%. While home prices have remained relatively consistent between 2022 and 2023, the higher interest rates have contributed to a deceleration in the home purchasing process. Despite this slowdown, the region continues to experience historically high overall home prices.

Since 2019, home prices have surged by more than 60%, and rental costs have seen a notable increase of 44%. Meanwhile, the household median income has experienced a modest uptick of 4.7%, rising from \$60,629 in 2019 to \$63,531 in 2021. This reveals a concerning trend where the cost of housing has outpaced wage growth, leading to an average rent-to-income ratio approaching the cost-burdened threshold of 30%.

Housing Affordability

*based on household size of 4



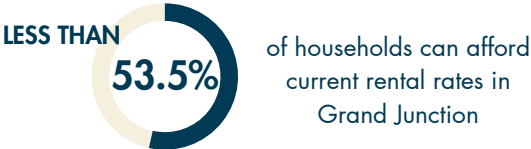
A Snapshot of Local Housing & Houseless Data

MEDIAN RENT: \$1500

44% INCREASE SINCE 2019

MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$382,198

60% INCREASE SINCE 2019



907

D51 STUDENTS FACING HOUSELESSNESS OR HOUSING INSECURITY AS OF JUNE 2023

The Unhoused population has increased by almost

43% since 2019.

In 2023, the City of Grand Junction completed the Unhoused Needs Survey Report and engaged JG Research to conduct a comprehensive Unhoused Needs Assessment. The contributing factors to homelessness among People Experiencing Houselessness (PEH) are varied, encompassing economic, social, and health-related issues. Drawing on data from HUD Point-in-Time Count, By Name List, and D51 school district, it is estimated that approximately 2300 individuals experienced houselessness in Mesa County over the past 12 months.

Significantly, over 50% of individuals listed on the By-Name registry reported having a disability, and more than 67% experienced chronic houselessness, defined as individuals or families with a disabling condition unhoused for over one year or having faced at least four episodes of houselessness in the last three years. Approximately 60% of the community's unhoused population remains unsheltered. The Unhoused Needs Survey Report unveiled that 54% of surveyed individuals had been residents of Mesa County for more than four years, with many choosing Grand Junction for employment opportunities or establishing connections through friends or family in the area.

In 2023, 41 individuals tragically passed away while being unhoused or recently housed. Notably, none of these deaths were attributed to weather-related causes; rather, many were a result of medical concerns, natural causes, car accidents, and drug overdoses.

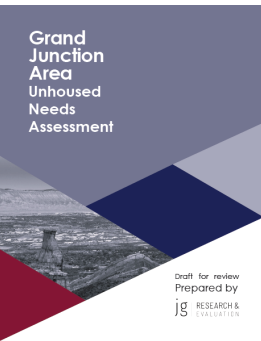


UNHOUSED NEEDS
SURVEY REPORT

2023 | City of Grand Junction Housing Division
housing@gjcity.org | 970.254.4081

Unhoused Needs Survey Report

In the Fall of 2022, the City launched a survey to directly engage individuals experiencing houselessness (PEH). The primary objective was to identify the entry points into houselessness and the barriers hindering individuals from transitioning out of this situation. Over 70 surveys were completed. The survey illuminated various intervention points within our community where solutions could be implemented. The results emphasized the need for a more comprehensive system assessment to inform effective policy solutions. The complete report is available by visiting the City's Housing Division website: <https://www.gjcity.org/353/Housing>.



Grand Junction
Area
Unhoused
Needs
Assessment

Draft for review
Prepared by
jg RESEARCH & EVALUATION

Unhoused Needs Assessment (UHNA) & Strategies

In June 2023, the City, in collaboration with various partners, initiated an Unhoused Needs Assessment aimed at comprehending the current and anticipated requirements of People Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) and the housing and supportive service agencies dedicated to assisting them. The assessment was conducted to evaluate and pinpoint crucial housing and service gaps, identify barriers, and gauge the present system's capacity to address both existing and future needs. Its overarching purpose was to guide community strategies, ensuring that instances of houselessness are infrequent, brief, and not recurring. The assessment was completed in November 2023. The second part of the work, creating a strategy to address the needs presented in the UHNA, is expected to be finalized in early 2024. To access the complete draft Unhoused Needs Assessment (UHNA), please visit the City's website <https://www.gjcity.org/353/Housing>

Looking Ahead...

Unhoused Strategies

The Unhoused Strategy will expand on the Unhoused Needs Assessment (UHNA) by identifying strategies to fill key gaps and address significant needs of people experiencing houselessness (PEH) in the Grand Junction area in support of reaching the community goal of functional zero. Recommended actions and timelines will be provided for each strategy as how the city, county and other partners can work to identify approaches to implementation as well as opportunities that can facilitate implementation.

In 2019, the Homeless Coalition, a collaboration of more than 43 local service agencies, government entities, and community members, pledged to transition into a "Built for Zero" community—a movement focused on achieving functional zero in homelessness by implementing a systematic approach to minimize new entries into homelessness, promptly identify and address individuals' needs, and ensure swift exits, aiming to make houselessness rare and brief.

**Built
For
Zero.**

City of Grand Junction Summary of Housing/Unhoused Funding



Over the past two years leading into 2024, the City has committed \$19 million in direct funding, which includes \$4.45 million in awarded grants. This investment has been instrumental in leveraging over \$43 million from partners, resulting in a total housing investment of \$62 million. These funds have facilitated the construction of at least an additional 102 units currently in progress and have laid the groundwork for the future development of an additional estimated 500 units of affordable housing within the community. Additionally, this investment has provided crucial operational support and capital improvements for housing and homelessness partners. Looking ahead, if the City allocates its \$8.3 million in 2023 and 2024 PAB (Private Activity Bond) allocation towards housing initiatives, the investment and unit count are expected to increase further, reinforcing the City's commitment to addressing housing needs.

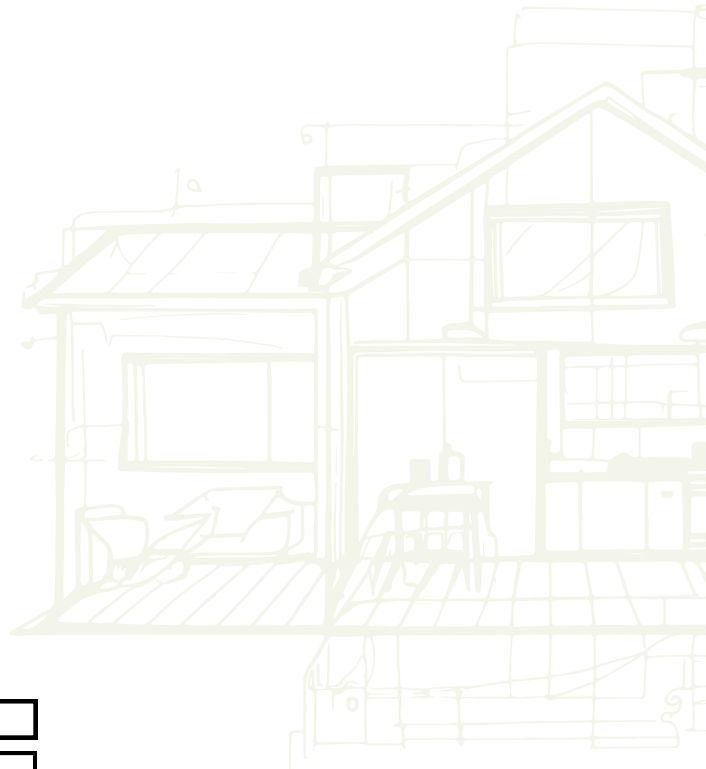
City of Grand Junction Direct Funding & Grants

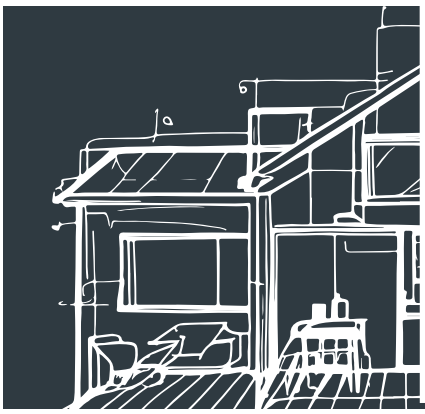
Grand Junction Housing Authority	\$5,043,495
Salt Flats Project	\$3,200,000
Pro Housing - LAP	\$2,000,000
Grand Valley Catholic Outreach	\$1,846,765
Resource Center	\$1,302,025
Housing Resources of Western CO	\$1,161,667
Remaining - ADU & Unassigned 2024	\$1,152,133
Housing Division Operations & Programming	\$1,123,825
Joseph Center	\$947,707
Homeward Bound	\$367,500
Non-Profit & CDBG	\$359,713
Hilltop Family Resources	\$300,000
Habitat for Humanity	\$217,014

Total Direct Funding & Grants	\$19,021,844
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Partner Investment	\$43,000,000
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Total Investment Generated	\$62,021,844
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Housing Strategies & Implementation

In 2019, The City of Grand Junction and several partners began work with Root Policy Research on the Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment. In 2021, the Housing Needs Assessment informed the creation of a City of Grand Junction Housing Strategy. On October 6, 2021, City Council adopted Resolution 82-21 which included the 12 original housing strategies. On December 21, 2022, the City adopted Resolution 96-22 which added a thirteenth housing strategy.

Strategy 1 | Participate in regional collaboration regarding housing/houselessness needs and services.

Housing & Homeless Coalitions

On a monthly basis, staff actively engage in two local coalitions established to keep all service providers informed about housing and homelessness issues, coordinate collaborative efforts, and enhance awareness of the available services.

Mesa County Collaborative for the Unhoused

City staff actively participate in the Collaborative on a monthly basis. Collaborate is structured to unite service providers with the aim of establishing a comprehensive system of care for the unhoused in Mesa County. Launched in 2022, this collaborative has played a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of assessment tools, referral mechanisms, and grant applications dedicated to enhancing services for the unhoused population.

Feedback Sessions

In 2023, the City hosted over 40 meetings with local constituents, service providers, and community groups to talk about housing, houselessness and work towards finding solutions.

Strategy 2 | Adopt a local affordable housing goal.

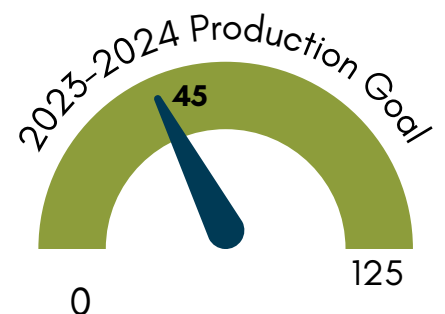
On June 1, 2022, the City Council adopted Resolution 48-22, establishing a Housing Goal of adding 45 affordable housing units annually. Subsequently, in August 2023, City Council approved Resolutions 64-23 and 65-23, empowering the City Manager to commit to Proposition 123 and adjusting the City's definition of affordable and attainable housing to align with Prop 123 definitions. The City formally committed to Prop 123 unit production goals in August 2023. For the year 2023, there were 44 new rental units, one new for-sale unit, and five potential units counted toward the Prop 123 commitment (those built after August 2023). Due to being a partial year, all 2023 units will contribute to the 2024 unit production goals.

City Goal:

To Increase affordable housing stock by 9% over three years (374 units) or approximately 125 units annually by December 31, 2026.

Affordable Housing is defined as:

- Housing that costs no more than 30% of a households income
- Rental units affordable to households earning less than 60% AMI
- For-Sale units affordable to households earning less than 100% AMI



Strategy 3 | Implement land code changes that facilitate housing development.

The City contracted with Clarion & Associates in December 2021 to update the City's Zoning & Development Code (ZDC) with the intent to update regulations to better reflect the key principles and policies described in the 2020 One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan, achieve a higher level of regulatory efficiency, consistency, and simplicity, and identify constraints and opportunities for affordable and attainable housing, consistent with housing strategies. City Council adopted the new ZDC on December 20, 2023 through Ordinance No. 5190.

Some key changes to increase housing opportunities included:

- Increase a range of allowed housing types
- Incorporate higher levels of bicycle and overall pedestrian connectivity
- Revising standards to increase flexibility in design, setback, and buildable area
- Decreasing parking requirements for residential uses and for affordable housing development

Strategy 4 | Encourage Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Development.

In an effort to enhance neighborhood density, offer additional income and affordability for homeowners, diversify housing options, maximize existing infrastructure, meet multigenerational community needs, and expedite housing unit creation, the City implemented several measures:

Updated ADU Code (Ordinance 5115): The City revised the Code for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), permitting on-street parking, eliminating entry requirements, amending design standards, and increasing ADU allowances on two-family or duplex properties. Furthermore, the update permits one attached and one detached ADU per site.

ADU Toolkit Development: A comprehensive ADU Toolkit was developed to streamline the planning process for homeowners, providing essential resources and guidance for those interested in incorporating ADUs on their properties.

Educational Workshops: The City hosted seven ADU educational workshops, attracting more than 170 participants. These sessions aimed to educate and inform the community about the benefits and processes associated with Accessory Dwelling Units, fostering greater understanding and engagement in this housing initiative.

ADU Production Program – \$250,000

The City adopted Ordinance No. 5136 which established an ADU Production Program to incentivize and support the construction of ADUs within the City of Grand Junction. Eight ADUs were approved for funding in 2023.

Strategy 5 | Formalize existing incentives and consider additional incentives for affordable housing development.

Affordable Housing Incentive

In 2022, the City embarked on an initiative to create an Affordable Housing Incentive, intending to offer developers a significant reduction in Impact Fees if they allocated more than 10% of units in their projects to affordable housing. Despite organizing several feedback sessions with local developers, their lack of interest led to the incentive not receiving approval. However, as part of the annual non-profit funding request process, the City consistently supports non-profit agencies, by covering Impact and Development Fees for affordable housing units.



Strategy 6 | Utilizing City owned land and/or acquire vacant or underutilized properties for Affordable and Mixed-Income Housing.



Ballot Measure 2b: Passed November 2023

In the November ballot, Grand Junction voters approved question 2b, amending the City of Grand Junction charter to extend the lease duration of City-owned property from 25 years to up to 99 years, specifically for Affordable or Workforce housing. This amendment aims to enhance the likelihood of securing future grants for land acquisition, land banking, and the development of vacant City-owned land.

Proposition 123: Landbanking Grant Application – Requested \$2,200,000

In November 2023, the City approved Resolution 93-23, endorsing the submission of an application for the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) Land Banking Program grant totaling \$2,200,000. This grant is intended for the acquisition of 21.45 acres, earmarked for future affordable housing development comprising 300-500 units. The application incorporated a \$1,000,000 grant match from the City's general fund. *The City anticipates receiving notification of grant approval or denial in early 2024.*

Grand Junction Housing Authority – \$750,000 Cash Match; \$2,250,000 Grant –Received

In 2022, City Council allocated \$1,000,000 to support implementation of the housing strategies. The budget amount was carried forward into the 2023 budget. Of those funds the City set aside \$750,000 to be utilized for a cash match for the DOLA Innovative Affordable Housing Incentive Grant. The City received notification of the \$2.25 million grant in early 2023. The grant would assist with the purchase of a 15-acre property for the GJ Housing Authority. The property was purchased in November 2023 and will support the development of approximately 300 units of affordable housing.

Strategy 7 | Create a dedicated funding source to address housing challenges.



In 2022, the City proposed two ballot measures to raise lodging tax by 1% and introduce a 6% short-term rental tax, but both measures were unsuccessful. As of now, the City lacks a dedicated funding source; nevertheless, it has designated its Private Activity Bond allocation to prioritize affordable housing projects.

Private Activity Bond (PAB) – 2023 Allocation \$4,031,651

Each year the State of Colorado allocates tax-exempt Private Activity Bond directly to local governments for the sole purpose of financing qualified projects including affordable housing. In years past, the City has utilized the fund to support entities like the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) or return the balance to the state. In 2023, having no affordable housing projects, the City approved Resolution 80-23 to carry forward the 2023 allocation for three years until a qualified affordable housing project that aligns with the City's goals has made a request.

Strategy 8 | Provide financial support to existing housing and houseless services and promote resident access to services.

Public Safety Support

Staff have collaborated with the Western Colorado Health Network (WCHN) to enhance outreach within the unhoused community, focusing on educating City Parks and Rec Dept, Union Pacific Railroad, and volunteer organizations about sharps, drugs, and associated hazards. City staff secured a grant for a Sharps Kiosk at the WCHN building, providing a safe disposal location for sharps containers. Additionally, City staff, alongside volunteers and organizations, engaged in educational initiatives with unhoused individuals addressing trash and refuse issues along the river, resulting in the collection of over 500 bags of debris beyond the City's routine efforts.

Neighbor-2-Neighbor Referral Team



The Neighbor-to-Neighbor Referral Team was launched in 2023 as a response to the needs observed during outreach to unhoused camps along the river. City staff, in partnership with local providers, provided harm reduction supplies and identified a lack of real-time referral services in those spaces. In 2023, the team expanded to include professionals from mental/behavioral health providers, case managers, medical staff, and housing navigators. Homeward Bound secured a state grant to fund additional outreach and medical services in collaboration with the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Team.

Over the last year, City staff developed rapport with the unhoused, referral agencies, and established systems for programmatic success. They have made over 47 visits to encampments, properties, parks, businesses, and areas where people experiencing houselessness (PEH) were present. This resulted in the engagement of approximately 164 PEH distribution of approximately 232 emergency resource brochures and made 202 referrals, resulting in positive outcomes such as additions to the By-Name List, housing vouchers, employment, and reuniting families through Travelers Aid.

Court Referral Program

The Court Referral Program involves City staff collaborating with the City of Grand Junction courts and Community Resource Officers (CROs) to offer housing and resource referrals as an alternative to fees related to trespassing tickets.

Community Involvement

The City is committed to participating in the ongoing efforts to end houselessness in the community and participated in several educational initiatives and committees throughout 2023. Some highlights include: serving with on the Colorado Balance of State Committee to develop a Coordinated Community Plan to End Youth Homelessness, serving with Mesa County Hunger Alliance to reduce food insecurity, providing a monthly feedback session in collaboration with local service providers to identify current and future needs of PEH and their families, and participate at the Weekend of Service and Understanding, and the Homeless Winter Immersion Experience Fundraiser to bring awareness to living outdoors.

Housing & Houseless Efforts funded through ARPA funding:

Mother Teresa Place, Grand Valley Catholic Outreach - \$1,500,000

The project will include 40 one-bedroom units of permanent supportive housing for most at-risk individuals experiencing houselessness and facing physical or behavioral health challenges. Wrap-around services will be provided by GVCO to ensure housing stability for these individuals.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

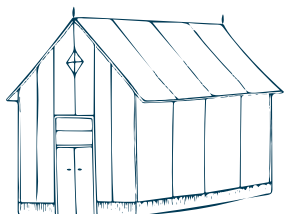
Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the City received \$10.4 million in ARPA dollars from the federal government to facilitate economic recovery. In 2022, City Council allocated \$1.4 million to address lodging revenue loss, leaving \$9 million available for distribution. In 2023, City Council decided to allocate the remaining \$9 million to support behavioral health, housing, and houselessness initiatives.

Down Payment Assistance Fund, Housing Resources of Western Colorado - \$1,000,000

The project aims to establish a down payment assistance revolving loan fund, facilitating homeownership for around 40 low-income households. The program offers a 0% interest loan of \$25,000 to eligible households, with no monthly payment, and the amount is recaptured when the home undergoes refinancing or is sold.

Joseph Center Expansion, The Joseph Center - \$947,707

The project expanded The Joseph Center by acquiring two adjacent buildings. The expansion will provide 15 more beds for the "Golden Girls" program, dedicated to women over 55 experiencing homelessness, and add an additional 20 emergency shelter beds for women and children experiencing homelessness. The project will also add showers and laundry facilities for their day center.



The Resource Center, Homeward Bound of the Grand Valley & United Way of Mesa County - \$912,400

The funds will provide for the acquisition of a temporary structure that will be used for the Center, a restroom and a shower trailer. The Center will serve the community as an ultra-low barrier facility that provides access to meals, services, support, housing navigation, and sanitation services.

Non-profit Funding

City Council has a longstanding tradition of supporting non-profit organizations within the community. Annually, these organizations have the opportunity to submit requests for consideration in the budget allocation process. In 2023, \$878,221 was allocated to the non-profit funding cycle.

2023 Non-profit funding totaling \$425,944 for projects related to housing and homelessness included:

- City Impact Fees, Habitat for Humanity - \$50,000
- Capital Funding for Operational Improvements, Housing Resources of Western Co - \$45,000
- First Aid Kits, Supplies and Transportation Passes for Mobile Clinics at Local Homeless Service Providers, Marillac Clinics, Inc. - \$21,444
- Operational Funding to Support Homeless Outreach Efforts, Mutual Aid Partners - \$35,000
- Capital to Support Affordable Housing Renovations, Grand Junction Housing Authority - \$83,000
- Funds to Support Domestic Violence Shelter Operations, Hilltop Family Resource Center - \$35,000
- Operational Funding for Emergency Shelter, Homeward Bound of the Grand Valley - \$100,000
- Operational Funding for Homeless Youth, Karis, Inc. - \$44,000
- Operational Support for Website Upgrades & Outreach, Solidarity Not Charity - \$12,500

Strategy 9 | Support acquisition/rehabilitation that creates or preserves affordable housing.

The Land and Building Acquisition Program

In 2023, City Council enacted Resolution 30-23, initiating the Land and Building Acquisition Program (LAP) aimed at offering financial support to developers for property acquisition, thereby offsetting housing development costs and addressing the housing shortage in Grand Junction. City Council, via Ordinance No. 5137, dedicated \$3,373,337 to fund the program, effective until December 31, 2023. Projects that the LAP Program funded:

Hilltop Project, Hilltop Family Resources – \$300,000

City Council adopted Resolution 66-23, to provide funding for the purchase of a four-plex for low income/affordable housing for individuals and families facing domestic violence after their emergency safehouse stay.

PRO Housing Grant – Requested \$4,000,000, *status pending*

In November 2023, the City endorsed Resolution 94-23 to submit an application for The Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing) grant from the U.S. Dept of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The application sought to leverage \$2,000,000 in City funds as a grant match, with the purpose to expand funding for the LAP. *The City expects to hear approval or denial of grant in early 2024.*

Strategy 10 | **Consider implementation of an inclusionary housing/linkage fee ordinance**

A Linkage Fee Study was approved in the 2024 budget and is expected to be completed in Fall 2024.

Strategy 11 | **Explore designation of an Urban Renewal Area (URA) and utilization of Tax Increment Financing for affordable housing.**

Recommended timeline for implementation 4–6 years; no update at this time

Strategy 12 | **Consider adoption of a voluntary rental registry program in conjunction with landlord incentives.**

Expected implementation in the first quarter of 2024.

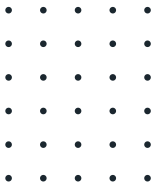
Strategy 13 | **Provide community engagement and education opportunities to address housing challenges and promote community participation**

Throughout 2023, City staff participated in a number of efforts including:

- Housing Book Club – In partnership with Mesa County Libraries, City Staff launched three book clubs, attracting approximately 60 participants. Featured book titles included, “Fixer Upper” by Jenny Schuetz, “Homelessness is a Housing Problem” by Coburn and Aldern, “Evicted” by Matthew Desmond.
- New Dimensions Class – Staff co-taught “Home for All: A Conversation about Housing in the Grand Valley” with the participation of 40 individuals.
- Staff served as panel participants at events such as Community Impact Council’s State of the Community Event and GJEP Economic Summit.
- By invitation, staff spoke to numerous at local clubs, service organizations, community groups, churches, and schools about housing.

United To Solve Homelessness, Poverty Immersion Experience

In 2023, United Way of Mesa County, The City of Grand Junction and several service partners collaborated together to create a community-based education workshop and immersive experience to help raise awareness, inspire solutions, and help solve the issue of homelessness. Four Poverty Immersion Experiences hosted more than 268 community members



Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) aimed at supporting local community development efforts. CDBG funds are allocated to eligible cities and counties to address a range of community needs, including affordable housing, infrastructure development, and economic revitalization. These grants are intended to enhance the quality of life for low and moderate-income individuals and communities, promoting sustainable development, job creation, and improved living conditions. Local governments use CDBG funds strategically to address specific challenges and foster comprehensive community development initiatives. In the 2022-2023 program year, the City of Grand Junction received an allocation of \$469,314, which included carry-over balances from previous years.

For the 2022 Program Year (Sept 2022-Aug 2023) projects included:

- Elm Avenue Safe Routes to School - \$120,000
- Grand Junction Housing Authority, Rental & Utility Assistance (CDBG-CV) - \$70,495
- Grand Valley Catholic Outreach, PreDevelopment for Mother Teresa Place - \$50,017
- Karis, Inc., The House Remodel - \$40,000
- STRive Group Home Remodel - \$63,222
- Hilltop, Bacon Campus Roof - \$39,871
- Housing Resources of Western Co, Mobile Home Repair - \$25,000
- Hilltop Family Resource Center fencing - \$19,676
- Meals on Wheels, Food Purchase - \$15,000
- STRive, Woodshop Remodel- \$13,000
- Riverside Education Center, Bookcliff Middle School After School Transportation - \$7,800
- Housing Resources of Western Co, Housing Counseling and Support - \$5717
- Counseling and Education Center, Low Income Counseling - \$10,000
- Hopewest, Extend Caregiver Support to Low & Moderate Income Families- \$6,367
- Mind Springs Health, Oasis Clubhouse Rehabilitation - \$4,667

Projects that will continue into the next program year:

- 27 Road - Safe Neighborhood routes
- Housing Resources of Western Co - Housing Stability
- Safe Routes to School Rocket Park Crosswalk
- Housing Resources of Western CO - Emergency Repairs for Mobile Homes and Critical Home Repair
- Counseling & Education Center - Low Income Counseling

2022 Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER)

The CAPER is an end of Program Year report required by HUD and an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments achieved with CDBG funding. To view the 2022 CAPER, please visit <https://www.gjcity.org/344/Community-Development-Block-Grant-CDBG>

Five-Year Consolidated Plan

To be eligible for CDBG funds, every five years the City is required to adopt a Five-Year Consolidated Plan that sets forth goals and priorities for expenditure of funds in the community. To view the Five-Year Consolidated Plan please visit <https://www.gjcity.org/344/Community-Development-Block-Grant-CDBG>



Contact Us :



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Office Address
**250 North 5th St
Grand Junction, CO 81501**



Grand Junction City Council

Workshop Session

Item #1.c.

Meeting Date: June 30, 2025
Presented By: Ashley Chambers, Housing Manager
Department: Community Development
Submitted By: Ashley Chambers, Housing Manager

Information

SUBJECT:

Overview of the Unhoused Needs Assessment, Strategy and Implementation Progress

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Grand Junction addresses houselessness through several key data-driven efforts, including the Unhoused Needs Assessment (UHNA) completed in 2023 and two Unhoused Surveys conducted in 2022 and 2024. These efforts informed the development of the community-wide Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan, formally adopted by the City in July 2024. The plan outlines coordinated actions to close housing and service gaps and advance progress toward Functional Zero. Staff will present key updated data and provide an update on implementation efforts and current initiatives.

BACKGROUND OR DETAILED INFORMATION:

In Fall 2022, the City of Grand Junction's Housing Division launched a survey to hear directly from people experiencing houselessness (PEH), aiming to identify common entry points into houselessness and barriers to exiting it. The insights gathered from this effort highlighted the need for deeper analysis and helped lay the groundwork for a more comprehensive approach. These findings directly informed the development of the Unhoused Needs Assessment (UHNA). With continued collaboration from the Mesa County Behavioral Health Team and the Grand Junction Housing Authority—and funding support from the Western Colorado Community Foundation, Rocky Mountain Health Plans, and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs—the City partnered with JG Research to conduct the UHNA. Completed in November 2023, the assessment evaluated the current and projected needs of PEH, identified critical housing and service gaps, and assessed the capacity of local systems to respond. The UHNA outlined key strategies, recommended actions, and timelines to guide how the City, County, and other partners can work together to meet the most urgent needs of unhoused individuals. These efforts culminated in the Unhoused Strategy &

Implementation Plan—a community-wide roadmap built on the research conducted through the UHNA. The plan refines earlier findings, outlines coordinated actions to address service and housing gaps, and advances the shared goal of reaching Functional Zero homelessness. It was formally adopted by City Council on July 3, 2024, through Resolution 49-24. In 2024, the City relaunched the survey to update the data, better understand shifting trends, and evaluate the impact of early strategy implementation.

Staff will provide an overview of survey and other local data, and present key efforts related to the implementation of the Unhoused Strategies.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Item is for discussion only.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Discussion only.

Attachments

1. Unhoused Survey Report 2025
2. Unhoused Strategy Implementation Plan
3. GJ Unhoused Needs Assessment



2025 |

UNHOUSED NEEDS
SURVEY REPORT

Housing & Houselessness as a City Priority

Comprehensive Plan Principle 5: Strong Neighborhoods and Housing Choice

1. Promote more opportunities for housing choices that meet the needs of people of all ages, abilities, and incomes
2. Partner in developing housing strategies for the community.
3. Support continued investment in and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and amenities in established neighborhoods.
4. Promote the integration of transportation mode choices into existing and new neighborhoods.
5. Foster the development of neighborhoods where people of all ages, incomes and backgrounds live together and share a feeling of community.

2023-2025 City Council Strategic Outcome: Welcoming, Livable, Engaging

Grand Junction fosters a sense of belonging, where people are accepted as themselves and have access to the amenities and services they need to thrive, and actively seeks participation from our community.

Grand Junction's 2020 Comprehensive Plan serves as a blueprint for the city, with its foundation resting on the community's vision for the future. This vision provides guidance for the formulation of goals, strategies, and overall development in Grand Junction.

The Strategic Plan, updated every two years, integrates the priorities identified as most crucial by the City Council into the broader framework of city planning and development.

Vision

The City of Grand Junction is committed to enacting housing policies and partnering with outside organizations that seek to increase affordable housing options, diversify housing choice, decrease the gap between need and housing inventory, and assist those without homes to access supportive and housing services.

Housing Division Overview

The Housing Division was launched in 2022 following the adoption of the City of Grand Junction Housing Strategy. The Housing Division has grown to three full time staff and has supported a Colorado Mesa University intern, Bachelor of Social Work students, an Americorp Hometown Fellow and an Americorp CivicSpark Fellow

Grand Junction Housing Strategy

The Grand Junction Housing Strategy was formally adopted by City Council in 2021 which included twelve housing strategies for implementation to increase housing options, affordability, and increase access to services. In 2022, the City adopted a thirteenth housing strategy focused on community engagement and education.

Unhoused Strategies & Implementation Plan

The Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan is a community-wide plan that builds upon the research conducted by JG Research in the Unhoused Needs Assessment (UHNA) in 2023. It enhances the initial findings outlined in the Unhoused Strategy Report, transforming them into a comprehensive community-wide plan. The plan is aimed at addressing critical gaps and meeting the immediate needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in the Grand Junction area and aligning with the overarching community objective of achieving Functional Zero. The Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan was formally adopted by City Council on July 3, 2024 through [Resolution 49-24](#).



Funding

From 2022 to its adopted 2024 budget, the City has committed \$19 million in housing and houseless needs. This funding encompasses capital projects, operational support for service providers, emergency assistance during COVID, funding for housing and homeless projects, matching and securing grants for housing initiatives, and actively expanding the City's role in addressing housing and houselessness issues.

Award Recipient

The City of Grand Junction's Housing Division received the 2023 Mary J. Nelson Inspirational Award from United Way of Mesa County for their outstanding work in implementation of housing initiatives and community education efforts.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

A thank you to Shae-Lynn Watts, a data consultant formerly at the Mesa County Public Health Department, for her guidance and insight in structuring and interpreting data.

Additionally, we want to thank CivicSpark Fellowship for providing Augusto Latorre the opportunity to serve the City of Grand Junction and help guide this research endeavor.

Last, but certainly not least, this report expresses deep appreciation for the individuals currently experiencing houselessness who participated in the survey and shared their stories. Their voices matter, and it is essential to ensure their experiences are genuinely heard and acknowledged. This research aims to honor their stories and contribute to the effort to end houselessness for all.

Photos appearing in this report were sourced from Canva Pro.

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A SNAPSHOT OF EXISTING COMMUNITY HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS DATA

To contextualize the survey findings, it's important to understand Grand Junction's recent housing and homelessness trends. Local data indicate a community under strain from housing affordability challenges and rising homelessness:

- **Housing Voucher Demand:** In Mesa County, nearly 2,973 households (about 5,999 individuals) are on the waiting list to receive a housing voucher, 94% of whom have incomes below 50% of the area median income. This highlights the significant unmet need for subsidized housing assistance.
- **Affordability Gap:** Grand Junction's Housing Strategy Update (2024) identified rising housing costs, stagnant wages, and a mismatch between housing supply and local incomes as key risk factors for housing instability. More specifically, the rental market saw significant losses of units priced below \$800 per month and increases in units priced above \$1500 per month. The rental gaps analysis shows a rental affordability gap of 1,211 units priced below \$625 (affordable to households earning less than 25%). Affordability has further dwindled for home purchasing as interest rates have increased. Between 2019 and 2024, home prices in Mesa County rose by 67.45% while wages did not keep pace. Entry-level home inventory has also dwindled, with homes under \$250,000 increasingly rare due to rising costs and cash buyers.

City Housing Production Goal:

The City's Housing Production Goal (as adopted by Resolution 48-22 and adjusted by Prop 123 alignment in Resolutions 64-23 and 65-23) is to: Increase affordable housing stock by 9% over three years (374 units) or approximately 125 units annually by December 31, 2026.

In Year 1 (2023-2024), the City anticipates producing 97 affordable housing units toward its cumulative 374-unit production goal, representing a 177% increase from the historical annual production of 35 units. While the City was on track to meet its 2024 goal, permitting delays have shifted 54 units to January 2025. For Year 2 (2024-2025), projections estimate an additional 80-155 permitted units. Finalized production counts for 2024 are anticipated to be available by June 2025, pending final guidance on unit counting.

To view the City's Housing Strategy Update 2024:



<https://www.gjcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/13851/GJ-Housing-Strategy-Update-with-Appendices-9-24-24?bidId=>

MEDIAN RENT: \$1500
44% INCREASE SINCE 2019
MEDIAN HOME PRICE: \$400,000
67.45% INCREASE SINCE 2019



35 } PRE-2023 AVG. UNIT production

374 } GOAL: AVG. UNIT (125/YR)

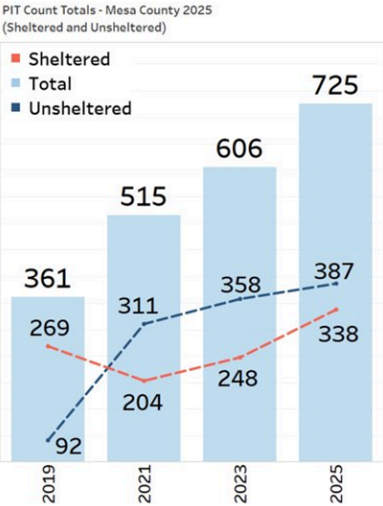
256.19% INCREASE

YEAR ONE 97* 177% ANNUAL INCREASE

*DEPENDENT ON FINAL STATE GUIDANCE FROM DOLA



A SNAPSHOT OF EXISTING COMMUNITY HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS DATA CONTINUED



Housing pressures, particularly for low-income renters and chronically underserved populations, continue to intensify. The 2025 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count for Mesa County identified 725 individuals experiencing homelessness—a 100.83% increase since 2019. However, due to limitations inherent in the PIT methodology, alternative approaches can offer a more accurate representation of the true scale of homelessness in the community.

One such approach, the Economic Roundtable Methodology, estimates that approximately 2,415 individuals in Mesa County experienced homelessness or were living in doubled-up situations over the past year. This reflects a 5% increase compared to the 2023 estimate of 2,300 individuals using the same methodology.

In 2024, the region's By Name List—a housing waitlist for unhoused individuals—consistently included over 400 individuals per month. On average, only 10–20 people were housed monthly, with wait times exceeding 150 days across all demographic groups.

At the conclusion of the 2024 academic year, 823 students in School District 51 were identified as facing homelessness or housing insecurity. While this represents a 9.26% decrease from 2023, the number remains deeply concerning. Additionally, in 2024, 17 individuals died while experiencing homelessness or shortly after being housed—a 57.5% decrease from the 40 deaths reported in 2023. Notably, none of these deaths were attributed to weather-related causes; instead, they were primarily due to medical issues, natural causes, car accidents, and drug overdoses.

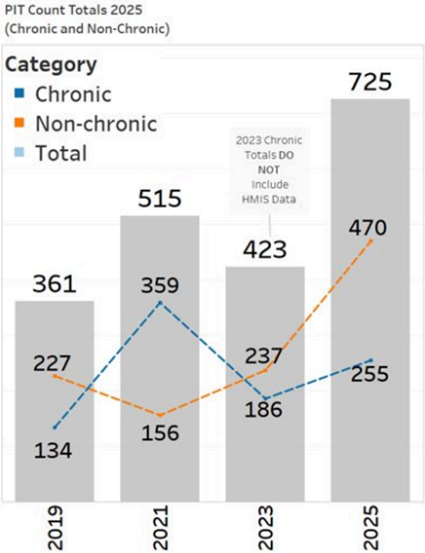
Overall key PIT count trends:

Unsheltered homelessness continues to grow, rising from 92 individuals in 2019 to 387 in 2025 (a 320.65% increase), highlighting the ongoing gap in immediate shelter and outreach services.

Sheltered homelessness has also increased, rising from 269 individuals in 2019 to 338 in 2025, a 25.65% increase. The greater use of shelter space, combined with housing market challenges that delay securing permanent housing, is causing people to stay in shelters longer. This, in turn, limits bed availability for newly unhoused individuals or those currently living unsheltered.

Chronic homelessness rose from 134 in 2023 to 255 individuals in 2025 (90.3% increase), while non-chronic cases saw the largest spike, increasing from 227 in 2023 to 470 in 2025 (107.05% increase), indicating a rise in people newly entering homelessness.

In short, based on local data, Grand Junction is not facing a temporary surge, but navigating a long-term affordability crisis that is pushing more people into homelessness. In 2020, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that for every \$100 increase in rent, homelessness rises by approximately 9% nationwide. In Grand Junction, that rate is significantly higher—an estimated 14.84% increase in homelessness for every \$100 rent increase. This highlights how structural challenges drive people into homelessness and underscores the importance of the City's Housing Strategies, including the goal of increasing the affordable housing stock by 3% annually. It also reinforces the need for a dedicated Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan—because complex problems require coordinated, sustained solutions.



TERMINOLOGY

Point-in-Time (PIT) Count: An annual count of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January, required by HUD. Sheltered PEH are counted every year and unsheltered PEH every other year. The PIT is known to undercount actual homelessness, but it is useful for tracking trends and for federal funding.

Sheltered: People residing in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or other temporary accommodations.

Unsheltered: People staying in places not meant for habitation (streets, cars, parks, abandoned buildings, etc).



INTRODUCTION

In August 2023, the City of Grand Junction's Housing Division began developing a refreshed version of the Unhoused Needs Survey to build on insights from the 2023 survey. The goal was to hear directly from people experiencing houselessness in order to better understand the current gateways into—and barriers to exiting—houselessness in Grand Junction. The 2024 survey was informed by a systems-thinking approach that frames houselessness not as a personal failing but as a solvable systems issue (Acharya, 2021).

Drawing on feedback from service providers, first responders, unhoused residents, and community stakeholders, the updated survey sought to illuminate how individuals become unhoused, what keeps them unhoused, and how local resources and interventions are shaping those experiences.

The impetus for this survey emerged from growing community concern. In 2022, business owners, service providers, and unhoused individuals alike noted that houselessness in Grand Junction was rising and straining both individuals and systems. As highlighted in the City's **2023 Unhoused Needs Assessment (UHNA)** and reinforced by this report, houselessness remains a prevalent — and rising — challenge in our community.

With input from partners like the Mesa County Public Health Research & Planning Team and Colorado Mesa University sociology professor Dr. Stephen Merino, the City developed a 44-question survey tool for the inaugural 2023 report. That first survey (conducted in December 2023) laid the groundwork for structured tracking of needs and trends. Over 70 surveys were completed in a two-week period, offering a snapshot of the local landscape.

In 2024, the survey was retained and refined rather than overhauled. Three new questions were introduced, and several existing ones were clarified to more accurately capture evolving experiences of PEH. 90 individuals were surveyed in a 2.5 week period. These updates aimed to strengthen the City's ability to monitor trends, identify gaps, and design responsive policies based on year-over-year insights. By maintaining consistency while making targeted improvements, the City can compare data across survey years to inform policy and track progress. More information about the Survey Methodology can be found in Appendix A. This report will provide a summary of findings. Specific data will be in Appendix C.

Importantly, this annual survey effort is one piece of a larger strategy to address homelessness in Grand Junction. Insights from these surveys directly inform ongoing initiatives such as the **Grand Junction Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan** (adopted July 2024 - more information in Appendix B). That community-wide plan, developed in response to the UHNA, lays out a coordinated roadmap to address critical gaps and meet immediate needs with the ultimate goal of achieving *Functional Zero* homelessness (i.e. making homelessness rare and brief). As this report will discuss, many of the challenges and needs identified in the survey align with the focus areas of the Implementation Plan's nine workgroups, from Housing Stability to Community Resilience, ensuring that data drives action on the ground.

PURPOSE

This report aims to deepen the City of Grand Junction's understanding of the realities faced by people experiencing homelessness (PEH) in our community. Specifically, the 2024 survey seeks to:

- **Understand** the characteristics and lived experiences of PEH in the Grand Junction area.
- **Identify** how individuals enter houselessness, and the pathways that lead to housing instability.
- **Inform** local housing and homelessness policies by providing actionable insights for the City and its community partners.
- **Support education and awareness** for elected officials, City staff, and the broader public about the systemic and personal challenges that shape the realities of houselessness in our region.
- **Track progress and change over time** by comparing 2024 findings with 2023 data, identifying shifts in needs, challenges, and service access.
- **Showcase local efforts and strategies** that have shaped the current landscape - while also identifying gaps that call for updated approaches and data-informed action.

TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this report, we use terms like **People Experiencing Houselessness (PEH)** instead of "homeless people," emphasizing homelessness as an experience rather than a defining characteristic. Whenever possible, we say **"houseless"** or **"unhoused"** interchangeable with "homeless." Many PEH feel they have a home even if they lack a traditional housing structure and people have diverse experiences of houselessness.

Note: This report avoids terms like "vagrant," "transient," or "hobo" due to their negative and derogatory connotations. Such terms have vague definitions and carry stigma. Instead, we use terminology grounded in data and respectful of individuals' dignity.

**Built
For
Zero.**

In 2019, the Homeless Coalition, a collaboration of more than 43 local service agencies, government entities, and community members, pledged to transition into a "Built for Zero" community—a movement focused on achieving "functional zero" in homelessness by implementing a systematic approach to minimize new entries into homelessness, promptly identify and address individuals' needs, and ensure swift exits, aiming to make houselessness rare and brief.



KEY FINDINGS & SURVEY RESULTS



TERMINOLOGY

Chronic Houselessness: Individuals without housing for more than one year, or had at least four episodes of houselessness in the past three years. (Note: Federal definitions of chronic homelessness often also require a disability and unsheltered status)

Episodic (Non-Chronic) Houselessness: Individuals experiencing three or fewer episodes of houselessness within a year. This often affects teens and young adults, those earning low wages, or anyone in unstable housing situations.

Transitional Houselessness: houselessness resulting from a significant life change or crisis. Often triggered by economic factors (rent increases, job loss, eviction). Individuals tend to be younger and typically require only short-term assistance or temporary housing before regaining stability.

Hidden Houselessness: undocumented or underreported houselessness. Individuals may be “couch-surfing” or temporarily staying with others without a permanent arrangement. They might not seek services due to embarrassment, mistrust of systems, or not realizing they qualify. Without intervention, hidden houselessness can lead to episodic or chronic houselessness.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Gender and household composition data remained consistent with previous years. A slight majority of respondents identified as male (58%), with fewer identifying as female (40%) and even fewer (less than 2%) as non-binary or who did not answer. Most were adults without children in their care, and very few were part of family units—suggesting possible underrepresentation of families in the survey or may be accessing services through separate, more targeted channels.

While most respondents identified as White (85%), reflecting Mesa County’s overall population, individuals identifying as Native American, Hispanic/Latino, and African American were also present. Though the proportion of non-white respondents (15%) was lower than national trends, this likely reflects survey limitations rather than a lack of disparity. National research consistently shows that that people of color are overrepresented among unhoused populations. Locally, Native American and Black residents, though a small portion of the general population, appear disproportionately among those seeking services. This points to possible gaps in outreach – particularly to Hispanic families and migrant communities – and emphasizes the need for more inclusive and culturally responsive engagement in future surveys.

The 2024 survey data reveals a significant demographic shift that mirrors a growing national concern: the “graying” of houselessness. This year, 62% of respondents were aged 45 or older

up from 48% since 2023 – signaling that older adults are increasingly impacted by housing instability in Mesa County. Nationally, over half of unhoused adults in the U.S. are now over the age of 50. Alarming, Mesa County’s older adult homelessness rate is nearly double the state average. These trends point to the growing need for housing solutions that address both economic vulnerability and aging-related health needs. Service providers such as the Joseph Center, Catholic Outreach, and Mutual Aid report a visible rise in seniors seeking housing support.

Full demographic details are available in the Demographics Section of Appendix C.

CHRONIC HOUSELESSNESS

Survey results allow for a closer look at the differences between those experiencing chronic homelessness and those who are episodically or newly homeless in the Grand Junction area. This distinction is important because strategies to help may differ between the groups.

As defined earlier, chronic houselessness in this study refers to being unhoused for over a year or repeatedly (4+ episodes in 3 years). In our 2024 sample, about one-third of respondents met the chronic definition, and two-thirds were non-chronic (homeless for less than a year or just a few short episodes).

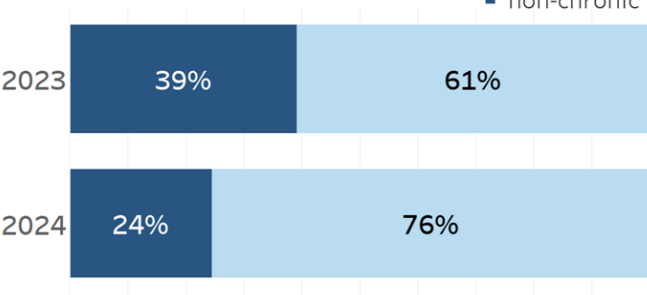
This shift marks a significant worsening of long-term homelessness in Grand Junction. By comparison, the national rate is roughly 31% (2023 AHAR), placing Grand Junction at over 2.5 times the national average, suggesting entrenched systemic barriers to housing stability in the region. The rise in chronic homelessness may reflect missed opportunities to resolve housing crises early – before they become long-term. While fewer newly homeless individuals entering the system might partially explain this trend, it’s more likely that episodic homelessness is becoming entrenched due to a lack of affordable housing, insufficient case management, and limited early intervention support.

**\$36,000/
year**

The average cost of chronic houselessness on taxpayers. (National Alliance, 2017)



Chronicity Status Distribution



Chronic homelessness continues to disproportionately impact older adults. This mirrors statewide and national patterns, but the local rise is particularly steep. In 2024, 58% of chronically unhoused individuals were over age 45, while only 27% of the non-chronic group fell into that age range. This mirrors findings from 2023, but the share of non-chronic respondents over 45 rose by nearly 39% year-over-year, suggesting that older adults are increasingly vulnerable across all homelessness categories. Local service providers—including The Joseph Center, Catholic Outreach, and Mutual Aid Partners—have reported a visible rise in seniors seeking housing-related support. This observation aligns with quantitative data and highlights a growing need for aging-friendly services, supportive housing, and care coordination.

Gender differences also emerged. While 77.37% of non-chronic respondents identified as men and 22.73% as women, those figures shifted significantly in the chronic group, where women made up 46%, a 23-point increase. Compared to 2023, the proportion of women in the non-chronic category also grew, from 22% to 34%, reflecting both changing trends and possibly better outreach to unhoused women. Still, consistent with national data, men remain overrepresented in the overall unhoused population (Henry, 2020).

In summary, chronic homelessness in Grand Junction is characterized by older individuals with deeper health and economic challenges who are heavily engaged with services but still lack the housing or support to exit homelessness. Non-chronic homelessness spans a range of ages (though increasingly older as well) and often results from acute economic or personal crises; these individuals might resolve their situation faster if they get a bit of help or if their crisis passes. The City's strategies need to address both: prevent those short-term crises from turning into long-term homelessness (through prevention and rapid rehousing), and provide intensive support and housing options for those already chronically homeless (through permanent supportive housing, case management, etc.). The UHNA's recommended strategies included both ends - from expanding rental assistance and eviction diversion to creating more permanent supportive housing units - directly targeting these needs.

Additional details on Chronic vs. Non-Chronic Houselessness can be found in Appendix C.

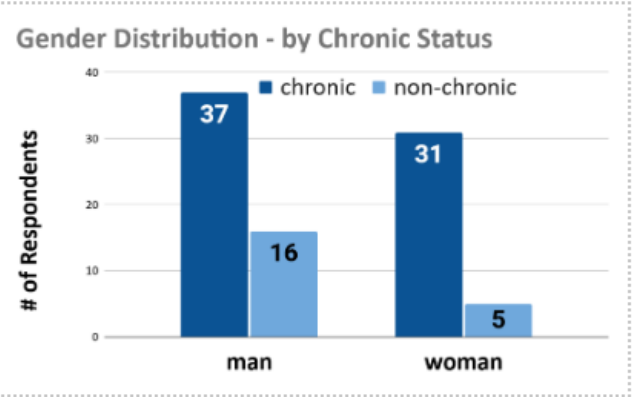
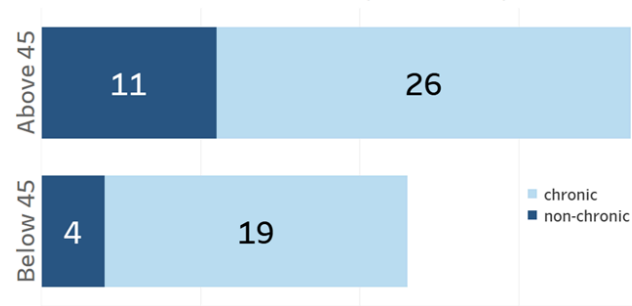
ROOTED IN COMMUNITY - HOMEGROWN HOUSELESSNESS

One of the most important and frequently overlooked findings is the strong local connection of those experiencing houselessness in Grand Junction. Consistent across both the 2023 and 2024 surveys, over 80% of respondents reported living in the Grand Junction area prior to becoming unhoused. Many have longstanding ties to the community, with more than half stating that they had been living in their own home or apartment before losing housing. Another 27% had been staying with friends or family, while only about 6% had arrived from outside the area or were staying in temporary accommodations such as motels. These findings challenge persistent myths that unhoused individuals are primarily "outsiders" drawn to the area of services or leniency, or bused here from other locations. Instead they reflect a deeply rooted local crisis driven by economic hardship, lack of affordable housing, and insufficient safety nets.

15.8 years

Average number of years individuals have lived in Mesa County

Chronic Houselessness by Age (2024 Totals)



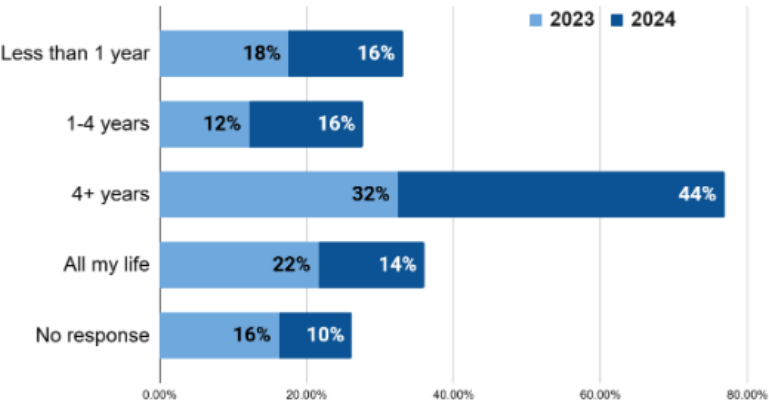
In 2024, more than two-thirds (68%) of respondents reported living in Mesa County for over a year. Nearly half (44%) had lived here for more than four years, and another 14% reported living here all their lives. Only 16% of respondents said they had been in Mesa County for less than one year at the time they became unhoused – a figure consistent with the previous year's data (18% in 2023).

Even among those who did come to Grand Junction recently, very few cited services as the reason. Of the small number of respondents who said they arrived in Mesa County due to being bused here or attracted by specific services (19 people in total), the majority of those (12) were non-chronic, and only 7 were chronically homeless individuals. Moreover, one of the key relationships between time spent in Mesa County and chronic houselessness is especially telling. Among 2024 respondents, 85% of chronic respondents had lived in Mesa County for over a year, and 67% for four or more years. In contrast, 36% of non-chronic respondents had lived in Mesa County for less than one year, and only one non-chronic respondent reported being a lifelong resident



A similar pattern appeared in 2023. 63% of chronic respondents had been in Mesa County for 4+ years or their entire life, while non-chronic respondents were more likely to be recent arrivals.

Time in Mesa County (2023 & 2024)



The overwhelming narrative is that people experiencing homelessness in Mesa County are our neighbors, not outsiders. They are people who once had housing here, have family here, or moved here for the same reasons anyone might – jobs, safety, or family – and then fell into homelessness. **This distinction is crucial: it means our homelessness challenge is largely home-grown. And, it highlights the need to invest in local, long-term housing solutions for our community members.** Ultimately, why someone came to Grand Junction should not determine whether they are offered help or a path to stability. The focus must remain on reducing homelessness through compassionate, data-informed solutions that meet people where they are – regardless of their origin.

At the same time, being rooted in the community hasn’t shielded these individuals from significant barriers. Many are still facing obstacles that prevent them from regaining housing, which we explore later in this report (see Barriers to Housing and Exiting Homelessness). In short, people experiencing homelessness here are local and want to remain part of this community, but they need systemic issues addressed to be able to return to stable housing.

More data on Living in Mesa County can be found in Appendix C.

LOSING HOUSING: COMPLEX PATHS

42%

of respondents indicated 2 or more reasons for losing housing

The reasons people lose their housing are rarely simple or singular. Instead, they reflect a web of interconnected personal hardships and systemic gaps that accumulate over time. Data from both 2023 and 2024 show that respondents frequently cited multiple reasons for losing housing, illustrating how overlapping stressors – like job loss, health challenges, and rising rents – can create a tipping point into homelessness.

In 2024, the most frequently cited primary reasons for becoming unhoused were: **job loss, addiction or substance use, mental illness, eviction, and an open-ended category of “other” causes.** Often, these factors were interconnected. For example, a job loss might coincide with a health crisis or untreated mental illness, which in turn makes it harder to find a new job or pay rent, eventually leading to eviction. The “other” category captured deeply personal or situational circumstances that didn’t fit neatly into predefined options – **such as fleeing domestic violence, the death of a family member (and resulting loss of income or support), or needing to leave substandard or unsafe housing conditions.** Each of these represents a cascade of events rather than a single incident.

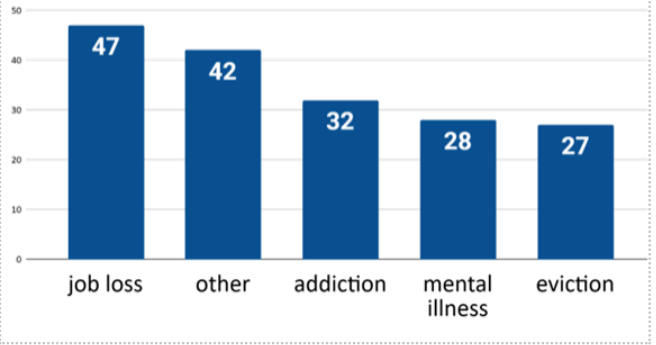
Notably, nearly **50%** of respondents selected *two or more reasons for losing housing*, and **16%** selected *four or more contributing factors*. This emphasizes the cumulative impact of hardships: houselessness often results from a combination of events and pressures rather than one isolated trigger.

This finding reinforces that houselessness is often the culmination of compounding problems. For many, it was the interplay of economic and health struggles that proved overwhelming. Without a safety net or timely intervention, a tough break becomes a breaking point.

Falling From Stability

Further underlining the complexity, the data shows that more than half of survey participants were relatively stable before they became unhoused – as noted, 54.9% had been in their own home or apartment, and another 27.4% with friends. **This means roughly 82% were housed in conventional situations until something went wrong.** Only a minority (around 18%) were in precarious or marginal situations (Prison/Jail (9%), Foster Care (3%), Other(5%) before homelessness. Many participants were one crisis away from losing housing – and that crisis came, whether in the form of an illness, a lost job, a rent hike, or a personal tragedy. While this finding reflects those surveyed, it is important to recognize that harder-to-reach populations may experience different pathways into homelessness.

Why do you think you ended up losing housing? (Top 5, 2023 & 2024 combined)



This insight has important implications: **strengthening the safety nets that catch people when they experience job loss, health issues, or other crises could prevent many cases of homelessness.** It also suggests that interventions like short-term rental assistance, eviction prevention, and accessible behavioral health care can make a decisive difference in keeping people housed. The UHNA completed in 2023 similarly found that many individuals in Grand Junction initially fell into homelessness from seemingly stable living arrangements, such as personal residences or living with family.

However, without timely support, many who experience an initial crisis face prolonged barriers to rehousing — a pattern reflected in the high rates of chronic homelessness documented across 2023 and 2024 survey respondents. This underscores the importance of prevention strategies — a focus area that the City's Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan addresses.

80 hrs/week

Average number of hours a minimum wage worker (\$14.51/hr) would have to work to afford a 2 - bd apartment (\$1550/mo)



Systemic Issues

While there are many reasons for losing housing cut across both chronic and non-chronic respondents, some distinctions point to deeper systemic trends:

- **Eviction** was more common among non-chronic respondents (11.3% vs. 7.6%), suggesting that abrupt housing displacement — without compounded legal or health barriers — may be more recoverable through shorter episodes of homelessness.
- **Divorce** also appeared more often among non-chronic respondents, reflecting relationship-driven instability rather than structural exclusion.
- In contrast, criminal records and domestic violence were cited more frequently by chronic respondents, pointing to the compounding effects of trauma, institutional exclusion, and long-term barriers to rehousing.
- **COVID-19** revealed a shifting pattern: while in 2023, both groups cited the pandemic as a contributing factor, by 2024 all 11 respondents who named COVID-19 were chronically unhoused — suggesting that what began as a temporary disruption evolved into prolonged instability for some.

What distinguishes chronic homelessness is not how it begins, but how long it lasts — and how hard it becomes to exit without sustained, coordinated support.

ACCESSING SERVICES - BASIC NEEDS

Survey participants were asked about their most pressing current needs — what resources or assistance would most help them right now. By understanding which needs are top priorities, the City and partners can target resources where they're needed most. We also compared the 2024 responses to the 2023 data to see how needs might be shifting as services evolve.

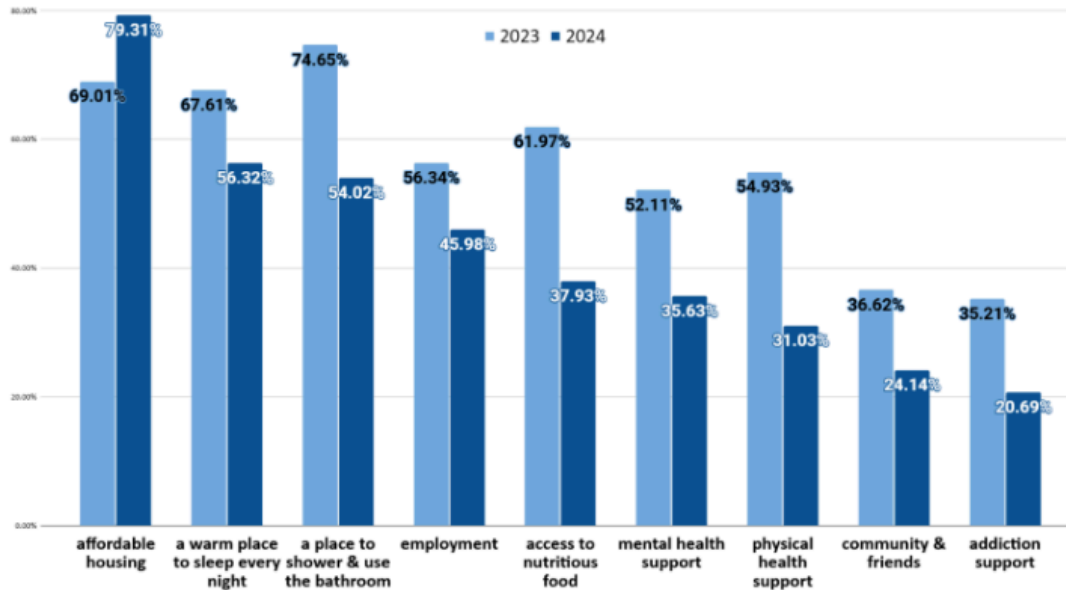
The results rank the top needs reported, and (in parentheses) show the change in percentage of respondents naming that need compared to the 2023 data. It's important to note that the up/down percentages indicate the relative change in how often a need was selected, 2024 vs 2023. For example, "Affordable Housing" was already the top need in 2023 and saw even greater emphasis in 2024, whereas needs like food, showers, and nightly shelter were cited less often in 2024 than before.

Ranking of Top Unhoused Needs		
	2024	2023
1	Affordable Housing (↑10%)	A Place to Shower & Use the Bathroom
2	A Warm Place to Sleep Every Night (↓11%)	Affordable Housing
3	A Place to Shower & Use the Bathroom (↓21%)	A Warm Place to Sleep Every Night
4	Employment (↓10%)	Access to Nutritious Food
5	Access to Nutritious Food (↓24%)	Employment

Affordable housing remains the #1 identified need by a wide margin (around 72% of all respondents named it as one of their top needs in both surveys). This is unsurprising given that housing is the ultimate solution to homelessness; however, it's important to note that when respondents say "affordable housing," they often mean more than just a low rent. They are expressing the need for housing options that they can actually access given their situation — more information can be found in the later section on Exiting Homelessness. A person with bad credit and no job doesn't just need a cheap apartment; they need an apartment where those circumstances aren't automatic disqualifiers, possibly paired with supportive services.



What Are the Most Important Unhoused Needs to You? (2023 & 2024)



As one provider put it, “It’s hard to think about a job interview when you’re hungry and haven’t bathed.” **The survey data suggest more people were able to get a meal or a shower in 2024 than in 2023, which is a positive sign of system improvement.**

Meanwhile, some longer-term needs saw a relative increase. Employment as a priority need rose by 11% from 2023. **This could indicate that more people are seeking opportunities to work, or that having secured some basic stability (through shelter or food), they now recognize employment as key to moving forward.** It may also reflect the outreach by workforce programs; for example, workforce liaisons have been more present at the RC and shelter, possibly spurring interest. Additionally, community and friends (social support) was mentioned by some, especially among chronically homeless respondents, highlighting the importance of human connection and support networks in recovery.

A particularly interesting change was the drop in stated need for mental health and addiction support, which both declined in frequency compared to 2023. Initially, one might worry that fewer people listing mental health services means they’ve given up on getting help. However, outreach staff believe the opposite: they attribute the decline to expanded on-site case management and the consistent presence of mental health and peer support professionals at places like the RC. In the past year, partnerships with Mind Springs Health and other providers have brought more counseling, substance use counseling, and recovery navigation directly to unhoused individuals. **As a result, some folks may feel their mental health needs are being addressed better now, making them less likely to list it as an unmet need. It’s worth noting, however, that on a systems level, behavioral health remains a critical priority.** The UHNA’s broader community input identified behavioral health services as the highest-priority need to address, which suggests that while the people we surveyed might be getting more support now, the overall service system still has gaps (for instance, in detox facilities or long-term treatment options). We should interpret the survey’s decline in this need cautiously and ensure we continue investing in mental health and substance use support, given how pivotal they are in the journey out of houselessness.

Differences by Chronicity: Stability vs. Survival

Needs varied significantly between individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and those who were newly or temporarily unhoused. Compared to non-chronic respondents, chronic PEH were more likely to prioritize long-term or stability-focused solutions such as: Affordable housing (71% vs. 72% – still the top priority for both groups); Employment (44% vs. 32%); physical health support (31% vs. 7%); and Community and friends (25% vs. 12%) – reflecting the importance of social connection in long-term recovery. In contrast, non-chronic respondents were more likely to prioritize transitional or short-term needs like: A warm place to sleep every night (64% vs. 46%), Access to showers and hygiene facilities (52% vs. 46%),

Encouragingly, basic survival needs like food and hygiene, while still important, were less frequently listed as top unmet needs in 2024. For example, the share of respondents needing better access to nutritious food dropped by 24%, and those needing access to a place to shower and use the bathroom dropped by 21%. Similarly, the need for a warm place to sleep every night (interpreted as either shelter or a safe place to camp) dropped by 11%. It would be a mistake to conclude that these needs are “solved” – clearly, people still require food, hygiene, and shelter.

However, the decline likely reflects improvements on those fronts over the past year. The launch of the Resource Center (RC) has provided a central daytime location offering meals, showers, laundry, and connections to services. Various nonprofits and faith groups have coordinated to expand free meal services and mobile outreach. And, combined with the efforts of more community collaboration through the Mesa County Collaborative for the Unhoused (MCCUH) and the City’s Neighbor 2 Neighbor Team the data suggests that these efforts have started to make a dent: when immediate survival needs are being met more reliably, individuals can begin to focus on longer-term goals like housing and employment. **In other words, better coverage of basic needs shifts the priority landscape upward.**

These developments are critical: meeting basic needs is a foundational step that allows people to then pursue stability.

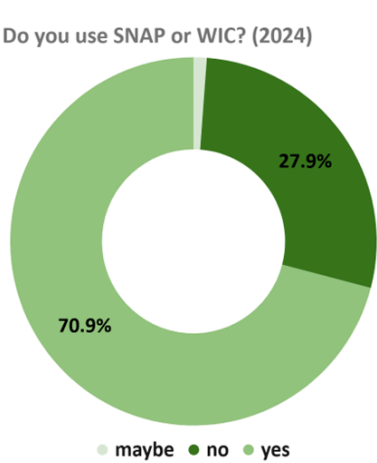


These differences reflect broader trends: the longer someone remains unhoused, the more their needs shift from immediate relief to systemic, stability-focused services. Early in a homelessness episode, a person is scrambling to meet basic needs (food, shelter, clean up) and safety. Over time, once those day-to-day survival needs are managed (even if in a rough way), the person may start thinking about how to get out of homelessness (housing, job, healthcare). However, the irony is that by the time someone has been homeless long enough to focus on stability, they often face more complex issues that make achieving stability harder. Our data show that chronic respondents engage with nearly twice as many support organizations on average as non-chronic individuals (about 5.2 vs 2.9 organizations). This indicates that those with deeper, more persistent needs have to navigate more complex systems of assistance, from shelters to clinics to social services. It reinforces national findings that the longer a person is unhoused, the more complex and intertwined their service needs become.



This insight has practical implications: to truly reduce chronic homelessness, we need to intervene earlier (so people don't become chronic) and also tailor services for those already chronic to address multiple needs simultaneously. Grand Junction's move toward a more coordinated system (with data sharing, case conferencing, and the like) as part of the Unhoused Strategy is aimed at exactly this: making the system easier to navigate for those with the most complex needs.

In essence, we see that **needs are not static**; they respond to what services are available. As the community ramps up certain services, immediate needs shift toward more long-term ones. **This is a positive trajectory: it means the system is (slowly) moving from just triaging emergencies to enabling progress.** The key is to keep all these plates spinning – maintain the basic services (so needs like food and hygiene don't resurge) while aggressively pursuing housing solutions and supportive programs.



Meals
In 2024, grocery stores remained the top reported meal source for unhoused individuals (62 respondents), followed closely by Catholic Outreach (52). These trends align with 2023 patterns, but notable shifts emerged and increased mention of grocery convenience stores. These changes may reflect evolving habits or slightly improved access to public benefits like SNAP and WIC. As reported by 2-1-1, food insecurity no longer ranked among the top five unmet needs in 2024. Out of 357 calls, 211 reported having met food needs. Andrew Escamilla states, "A lot of that has to do with the fact that most of our communities have established and reliable avenues for food help, so a lot of people know about those resources and don't need to call 211".

Still, systemic barriers remain. Nearly 28% of respondents reported not using SNAP or WIC benefits – a figure consistent with 2023 and far below national uptake rates among eligible individuals. According to the USDA (2023), about 85% of eligible U.S. residents access SNAP, but participation among people experiencing homelessness (PEH) remains significantly lower due to bureaucratic hurdles, stigma, and ID/documentation challenges.

Food insecurity remains a reality for many, especially for those relying on dumpster diving or similar food sources (13 respondents). While relatively few, these responses highlight persistent gaps in reliable, dignified access to meals. Access to consistent, nutritious meals is a foundational component of public health and stability – as emphasized in Principle 10 of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

These efforts not only reduce food insecurity but also ease the daily burden on individuals working toward housing stability. While progress is evident, food access challenges remain closely tied to broader housing insecurity, especially for families and older adults, as identified in the City's Unhoused Needs Assessment.

Where Do You Get Your Meals? (2023 & 2024)

	2023	2024
Grocery Stores	66%	69%
Catholic Outreach Soup Kitchen	66%	66%
Whitman Park / Solidarity Not Charity**	53%	
Convenience Stores/Gas Stations	39%	56%
HomewardBound	47%	43%
Resource Center*		42%
Community Food Bank	35%	40%
Mutual Aid Partners	30%	30%
Church "blessing boxes"	27%	27%
The Joseph Center	20%	27%
Dumpster Diving	15%	18%
GV Peace & Justice	19%	8%
Other	4%	17%

\$202/mo

The average SNAP benefit for a single-person



Where Have You Slept While Homeless in Mesa County? (2023 & 2024)

	2023	2024
Homeless Shelter (sheltered)	59%	62%
Street (unsheltered)	57%	64%
Friend's/Family's Home (sheltered)	47%	44%
Car/RV (unsheltered)	46%	39%
Hotel/Motel (sheltered)	46%	38%
River Encampment (unsheltered)	39%	39%
Public Park (unsheltered)	36%	36%
Public Lands (unsheltered)	32%	28%
Transit Stop (unsheltered)	18%	14%
Day Center (sheltered)	7%	22%
Transit (unsheltered)	9%	9%
Other	4%	5%
Courthouse (sheltered)		2%
Desert (unsheltered)	1%	

Two major patterns emerge: 1) more individuals are entering homelessness and 2) a growing number of individuals are staying homeless long enough to meet the criteria for chronic homelessness, with limited options for safe, long-term housing.

Even though more chronic respondents selected sheltered locations in 2024 than in 2023, the proportion of chronic PEH relying on unsheltered sleeping remains alarmingly high. **This reinforces the need for deeply affordable, low-barrier housing and long-term solutions that meet the needs of those with the most severe vulnerabilities.**

Safety and Support

In 2024, the survey shifted to a multiple-choice format to better capture which organizations provide support to unhoused individuals in the Grand Valley. Catholic Outreach, the Resource Center, and the Community Food Bank were the most frequently listed – suggesting that respondents often equated “support” with direct access to meals, case management, and consistent presence. This overlap with top-ranked meal sources reinforces a key insight: when asked about “support,” many respondents gravitate toward highly visible organizations that meet immediate, tangible needs like food, hygiene, and day services. These types of services are not only essential, but also the most consistently encountered in daily survival routines – especially for those cycling through chronic homelessness.

Less-visible but critical organizations, such as Rocky Mountain Health Network or GV Connects, appeared less frequently – not necessarily due to lower impact, but because they often operate on longer feedback loops, are more specialized, or serve individuals at specific stages in their housing journey. This highlights a broader takeaway: visibility and consistency often shape perceptions of support, even as low-barrier and behind-the-scenes services remain vital to long-term housing stability.

Sleeping

In 2024, chronic PEH were more likely to report sleeping in unsheltered locations than in 2023, signaling both a growing crisis and increased pressure on shelter systems. Despite a slight increase in reported shelter use—potentially influenced by expanded outreach through the Resource Center—**shelter access has not kept pace with need. A larger share of individuals, especially those experiencing chronic homelessness, are cycling through multiple unsheltered locations, often without a stable place to rest.**

This shift stems from compounding issues, including shelter avoidance due to capacity or policy barriers, proximity to essential services, and increased enforcement in visible areas.:

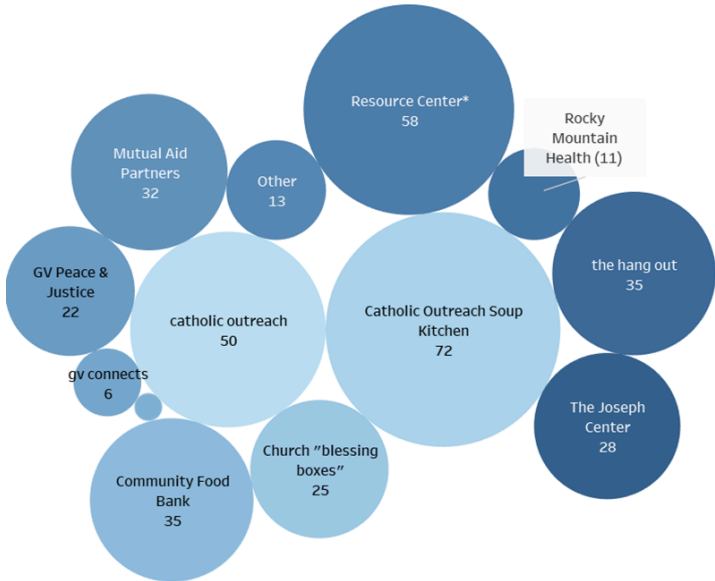
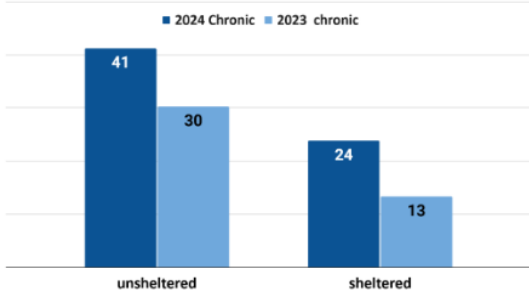
- Barriers to Shelter: Individuals often report challenges such as limited capacity, curfews, substance use restrictions, safety concerns, or a lack of privacy as reasons for avoiding shelters.
- Proximity to Services: Encampments are often closer to food banks, outreach teams, and health services, making unsheltered options more accessible despite their risks.
- Enforcement & Displacement: Street encampments are more visible to the public and law enforcement, contributing to frequent displacement and instability.

Chronic PEH reported sleeping in an average of 4+ locations, compared to 2.5 locations for non-chronic respondents, further illustrating their lack of stable housing solutions.

When comparing 2023 and 2024 trends:

- Street sleeping and use of public lands remain among the most frequent unsheltered locations.
- Car/RV and river encampment usage remains consistent with 2023, but the visibility of chronic unsheltered homelessness has grown.
- Shelter usage saw a modest increase in 2024 – likely influenced by expanded outreach efforts – but capacity remains a major constraint. Shelters, like those operated by HomewardBound, continue to operate at full capacity.

Frequency of Chronic PEH Sleeping Sheltered and Unsheltered



Organizations that Support You -2024

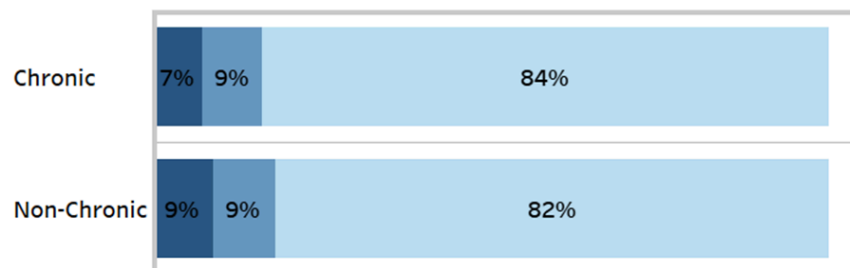
Medicare/Medicaid Enrollment

In 2024, the survey added a new question on Medicaid and Medicare enrollment to better understand healthcare access among people experiencing homelessness in Grand Junction. The data reveals that participation rates were nearly identical between chronic and non-chronic groups — with just 9% of respondents in each group reporting active Medicaid or Medicare enrollment.

This is significantly lower than expected, especially for Medicaid. In Medicaid expansion states like Colorado, about 94% of adults under 65 who are eligible are enrolled in Medicaid (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2023). Even in non-expansion states where access gaps persist, enrollment rates among the eligible still hover around 75–80%. Given that nearly all unhoused individuals surveyed would meet Medicaid eligibility thresholds, these findings point to local access barriers — likely tied to documentation challenges, stigma, or lack of sustained outreach.

For Medicare, which covers adults 65 and older, only 87.5% of respondents reported being enrolled, compared to the national average of ~95%. This gap, while smaller, still reflects missed opportunities to connect aging unhoused residents to critical health coverage.

Do You Receive Medicare/Medicaid? (2024)



Income bracket	2023	2024
\$1-249	5.4%	2.2%
\$250-499	1.4%	4.4%
\$500-999	13.5%	7.8%
\$1000-1999	9.5%	12.2%
\$2000+	2.7%	2.2%
No income	55.4%	47.8%
No response	12.1%	23.3%

Income

Income remains one of the most persistent barriers to housing stability. Among 117 respondents across 2023 and 2024 who said yes or maybe to looking for housing, **66% reported earning less than \$1,000/month** — well below Mesa County's average rent, which increased from **\$1,468 in 2023 to \$1,567 in 2024**. That rent hike (+6.7%) further strained the already fragile connection between income and housing access. (CMU GJ Economic Report)

In both years, most participants reported **no income at all**. In 2024, **38% of respondents reported having some form of income** — a slight increase from 2023. The second most common bracket after "\$0" was **\$1,000–\$1,999/month**, still well below the threshold needed for sustainable housing without a subsidy.

Despite this, at least 21 respondents in 2024 reported income levels that would qualify them for SNAP, but they were not receiving benefits — reinforcing the barriers discussed earlier (e.g., stigma, documentation, or outreach gaps).

When averaging reported income:

- 2024 monthly income among those reporting any amount: \$1,107.48
- Including \$0 earners, the average falls to just \$417.31
- (For context, SSI in Colorado is \$943/month for a single adult in 2024)

This sharp drop when including \$0 income shows just how economically precarious many respondents are — particularly those with chronic homelessness.

\$417/mo

Average monthly income
(including \$0 earners)

The gap between income and rent is widening, but this isn't just a financial issue — it's a systems issue. A growing body of research — and the City's own survey data — show that supportive services, access to benefits, and low-barrier housing pathways are just as critical as wages in helping people stay housed.

LOOKING FOR HOUSING

In 2024, when asked if they were looking for housing, 75% of people experiencing homelessness (PEH) responded "yes," with an additional 8.24% answering "maybe." This means over 86% of respondents expressed that they were actively seeking or intending to seek housing—representing a 14.67% increase from 2023. This represents that a sizeable majority of PEH who were surveyed have interest in housing.

Since January 2024, the average number of individuals and/or households on the local By Name List has been approximately 560— a 41.46% increase from the average in 2023 (398).

The rising demand reflects increased awareness among PEH of available housing services and support programs. Additionally, the increase of PEH may also be attributed to heightened awareness of the By-Name list and housing options among housing and outreach providers. Frontline staff to many agencies report growing trust in the service systems, more frequent referrals to housing and case management, awareness of the Coordinated Entry system, and better communication of housing availability.



These two changes are likely the result of extensive outreach, coordinated efforts, and shared data systems used by service providers and community partners through the City's Unhoused Strategies & Implementation Plan, the Neighbor 2 Neighbor Team, and the Mesa County Collaborative for the Unhoused (MCCUH). Together, these efforts represent a more unified regional approach to reducing long-term homelessness through housing-focused solutions—and a growing recognition that stable housing remains the primary unmet need for most PEH.

86%

of surveyed individuals said “yes” or “maybe” when asked “are you looking for housing?”

It’s possible that among the 17.65% of respondents who said, “no”, there are still individuals who would be interested in obtaining housing if given the right circumstances and/or have disengaged from a system that has failed them. Feedback from providers and previous studies suggest that some of these individuals may be reluctant to pursue housing due to lack of trust, fear of restrictive environments (ie cannot live with spouse or a bring their pet, etc.), or are discouraged by the long waitlists, reinforcing the need for more housing options.

And, regardless of whether someone said, “yes,” “maybe” or “no”, financial barriers continue to make housing unattainable for many. And as mentioned in the income section, 64% of respondents reported having no income, 72% of respondents in both years ranked affordable housing as their top need, and “Paying for housing” was cited as the number one concern about moving into housing by both chronic and non-chronic PEH.

This presents a stark paradox: while more PEH are actively seeking housing, many lack the financial resources to secure it. It reinforces the urgency of expanding deeply affordable housing, income supports, and low-barrier housing programs that address the unique economic challenges faced by this population.

Looking for housing	2024 Chronic %	2024 non-chronic %	2023 Chronic %	2023 non-chronic %
Maybe	4.76%	13.64%	23.26%	3.70%
No	15.87%	22.73%	37.21%	29.63%
Yes	79.37%	63.64%	39.53%	66.67%

HOUSING NEEDS

Ending homelessness requires more than simply increasing the number of housing units—it requires creating housing options that truly work for people, particularly those who have been unhoused the longest. The survey results reflect this need. While non-chronic individuals experiencing homelessness often prioritize affordability or immediate shelter, chronic PEH are more likely to express specific preferences shaped by years of adaptation, autonomy, and trauma recovery. 47% of chronic PEH said they needed housing that allows pets (compared to 10% of non-chronic). 40% prioritized being housed with a partner (vs. 5% of non-chronic). Only 5% sought shelter-based housing (vs. 17% of non-chronic).

These findings underscore that chronic PEH are not simply looking for any roof over their heads—they are seeking housing that respects the lives they’ve built while surviving without one.

The experience of long-term homelessness reshapes a person’s habits, identity, and relationships. As people remain unhoused, they often develop unique coping mechanisms, build survival networks, and adapt to systems that do not prioritize their needs. For many, transitioning into conventional housing — particularly models that impose restrictions — can feel disorienting or even unsafe. This can explain why interest in pet-friendly housing, partner-inclusive housing, and low-restriction environments ranked significantly higher among chronic PEH.

When asked about housing priorities, chronic PEH emphasized choice, safety, and support. This aligns with national research, which has consistently shown that housing retention and long-term stability improve when housing is paired with wraparound supports, such as mental health care, peer navigation, and case management. Services typically found and supported through Housing First models — not only those that offer units, but those that build supportive environments for sustained recovery.


TERMINOLOGY

By-Name List: A by-name list is a real-time, continuously updated list of individuals or households in a community who are experiencing homelessness. It includes key information about each person’s housing status, needs, and history. It allows service providers to coordinate care, prioritize resources, and track progress toward housing. Unlike general data reports, a by-name list is person-specific—each entry represents a real person known by outreach workers or service providers. The purpose is to ensure that homelessness is addressed at an individual level through collaborative, data-driven approaches that support faster and more effective housing placements.

Coordinated Entry System: A coordinated and streamlined process used by a community to assess, prioritize and connect PEH to available housing units based on their level of need and vulnerabilities.

The By-Name List in Mesa County is managed through Grand Valley Catholic Outreach as part of the Coordinated Entry System. Every other week approximately 40 individuals representing 14 local service providers meet to review cases and connect individuals to available housing units.





80% of chronically homeless individuals remained housed after five years when provided with both housing and support services.
-National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2020

HOUSING RE-ENTRY

For many, reentering housing is not only a physical transition—it's an emotional and psychological one. The 2024 survey reveals that the top concerns for people experiencing homelessness (PEH) when thinking about moving into housing remained remarkably consistent with 2023: **paying for housing, being alone, and rules**. Together, these top concerns reflect deep-seated fears about the sustainability of housing, the emotional risks of isolation, and the systemic or personal barriers that may arise—even when housing becomes available.

This insight is echoed in the **consistent concern about being alone**, reported by nearly a third of all respondents in 2024. **It underscores the vital role of social and emotional stability in housing retention. Bonds formed during homelessness—though not always labeled as “friendships”—often function as survival networks.**

The fear of losing these connections when entering housing may explain why “leaving friends” and “being inside” remain persistent worries across both years. In fact, while “leaving friends” consistently ranked lower overall, the high concern for being alone suggests that PEH may be reluctant to enter environments that lack connection or familiarity. These findings align with research by Dr. Marisa Zapata at Portland State University, who emphasizes that “successful rehousing is not only about getting people indoors, but about ensuring they can stay there—physically, emotionally, and socially.”

“Housing First”

Housing First is an evidence-based approach to ending homelessness that prioritizes providing people experiencing homelessness with permanent, stable housing as quickly as possible, without preconditions such as sobriety, employment or participation in treatment or services. The philosophy is simple: housing is a basic human need and should not be conditional.

Housing First gained momentum in the early 2000's when the success of Pathways to Housing, a nonprofit who developed the Housing First Model under the leadership of Dr Sam Tsemberis in 1992. The model was a response to a traditional “treatment first” model that required individuals to achieve sobriety or psychiatric stability before being eligible. Independent evaluations showed a high housing retention (85-90%) and reduced the use of emergency services – compared to 30-50% in traditional models. A systematic review also found that Housing First reduced homelessness by 88% and improved housing stability by 41%.

In 2003, Housing First began being endorsed under the Bush Administration’s “Chronic Homelessness Initiative”. Despite occasional criticism or confusion about its principles, bipartisan support for Housing First remains strong particularly for permanent supportive housing and veteran services. It was expanded and funded under Presidents Obama, Trump (1st term), and Biden.

Housing First has strong evidence backing its effectiveness, but it's not without critiques. A key concern is that it is often confused with “Housing Only,” where housing is provided without sufficient supportive services. While the model is built on offering voluntary services, critics argue that without strong mental health and addiction support, individuals may struggle to remain housed. Local implementation challenges, such as a lack of affordable units and underfunded wraparound services,

can dilute its impact and create public concern, especially when visible issues like substance use persist.

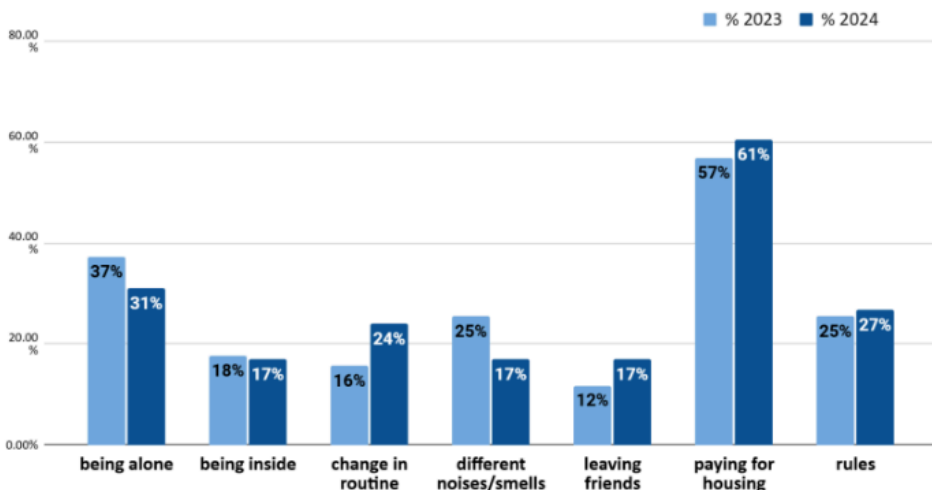
Others argue that Housing First is resource-intensive and may not be the best fit for all populations—such as families or youth with short-term housing needs—and can seem unfair to individuals who are low-income but not chronically homeless. Still, evidence shows that when properly implemented with robust services, Housing First significantly improves housing stability and reduces emergency system use. Its success ultimately hinges on adequate investment, community support, and a well-coordinated service system.

In addition to housing outcomes, participants in Housing First programs are more likely to engage with supportive services once housed.

- A study in Denver found that Housing First participants had more office-based psychiatric care visits, increased prescription medication use, and fewer emergency room dept visits compared to traditional programs.
- A Toronto based program found that participants experienced significant improvements in community functioning and quality of life over two years.

From its roots in 1992, Housing First has evolved from a local innovation to an endorsed strategy for ending chronic and veteran homelessness. It has received strong support across administrations – Democrat and Republican alike, because of its results: higher housing stability, lower public service costs and better outcomes for people with the most complex needs. Housing First is NOT “housing only” or “housing without structure”. When done correctly, it leads to improved housing stability, better health outcomes and reduced use of crisis services.

What worries you the most about moving into housing?



When we disaggregate responses by chronicity, distinct differences emerge:

- **Chronically unhoused respondents expressed greater concern for rules, change in routine** (27.27% vs. 12.5% among non-chronic), **and being inside** —issues that can feel disorienting or even triggering after long-term survival outside of structured systems.
- **Non-chronic respondents** were more likely to prioritize paying for **housing**, with 68.75% selecting it as their top concern, compared to 58.18% of chronic respondents.

These contrasts suggest that while affordability remains a shared concern, those who have been unhoused longer face more layered challenges—from emotional readiness to sensory overwhelm. **The longer a person remains unhoused, the more complex reentry becomes, as both psychological and structural barriers intensify.**

Poverty isn't just a lack of money, it's a lack of relationships - *Evicted*, by Matthew Desmond

BARRIERS TO HOUSING RE-ENTRY

Once someone becomes unhoused, returning to stable housing can be difficult due to numerous barriers. The survey asked respondents what **steps or changes** would be necessary *before* they could move into housing. The answers in 2024 mirror the patterns seen in 2023, painting a picture of the obstacles people face on the path out of homelessness.

The top steps cited are overwhelmingly centered on **eliminating discriminatory barriers and securing necessary income or documentation** before housing is attainable. In fact, over half of all respondents selected at least one form of discrimination as a key obstacle to getting housing.

Discrimination and "High Barriers"

At the top of the list were calls for "no discrimination" — whether based on credit history, criminal background, substance use, or behavioral health issues. **More than 80% of respondents in both 2023 and 2024 reported encountering some form of discrimination when trying to access housing.** Landlords or programs often require a clean rental history,

no past evictions, no criminal record, proof of sobriety, or adherence to strict rules. For individuals with complex histories — such as a past felony, a prior eviction, poor credit, or ongoing mental health and addiction challenges — these requirements present a nearly insurmountable barrier. **One respondent's comment encapsulated the frustration: "Sobriety — but it's too hard to stay sober on the streets."** This highlights the Catch-22 many face: housing programs demand stability (like sobriety or steady employment) as a precondition, yet obtaining that stability is incredibly difficult while living on the street.

This reflects a well-documented issue in houselessness systems. Research by the National Low Income Housing Coalition and evidence from Housing First programs show that high-barrier requirements (such as requiring sobriety, income, or good credit before providing housing) tend to exclude the very people who most need support.

In contrast, Housing First models, which Grand Junction is exploring, emphasize getting people into housing first and then providing wraparound services, without preconditions. These programs have shown higher rates of long-term housing retention and reduced returns to houselessness, even for those with behavioral health conditions or criminal justice involvement.

For Grand Junction, the prevalence of reports about discrimination and high barriers indicates a critical gap in our local housing system: **a lack of truly low-barrier housing options for individuals with complex histories.** The UHNA data reinforces this, noting that people cycling through jails, addiction treatment centers, or mental health facilities often face disproportionate barriers to re-entering into stable housing due to institutional stigma and limited reentry planning. In practice, this means some individuals shuttle between jail, hospital, and the streets precisely because they cannot access housing that would break that cycle. It's a revolving door that moves people from one institutional setting to another—without ever providing a home.



Financial Barriers

The other major theme in “steps before housing” is financial. In 2023, 79% of respondents said they would need “more money (income or savings)” before they could get housing. In 2024, that figure, while still high, declined to 65%.

Money remains a central concern – rents are high relative to incomes, and move-in costs (deposit, first month’s rent) can be prohibitive for someone starting from zero. The year-over-year drop of 14 percentage points might reflect some progress: possibly increased outreach about and access to financial assistance programs. Since last year, agencies and the City have expanded efforts to connect people with housing vouchers, emergency rental assistance, and income-based housing.

Indeed, **respondents in 2024 reported greater awareness of resources like housing vouchers, temporary housing programs, and rental assistance.** These supports may have eased some immediate affordability fears, particularly for first-time or newly unhoused individuals. However, two-thirds of respondents still feel they need more income to secure housing, underscoring that affordability remains a fundamental challenge. It also underscores the importance of the City’s housing efforts to increase affordable housing stock (e.g., the 3% growth goal in the Housing Strategy Update) and provide avenues for income growth or support for PEH.

Documentation and Administrative Hurdles

Another significant hurdle is obtaining the legal documents and paperwork needed for housing. Many housing programs (and even private landlords) require valid identification, social security cards, birth certificates, or proof of income. Replacing lost IDs or other documents can be a daunting task for someone who is homeless. **Encouragingly, our survey found a notable improvement on this front: the percentage of respondents citing “getting legal documents” as a necessary step before reentering housing dropped from 46% in 2023 to 34% in 2024.** This 12-point decrease may reflect the impact of better service coordination in the past year. Local organizations like The Peace & Justice Center have been actively helping PEH obtain IDs and vital records and a more centralized approach (through the Resource Center, Neighbor 2 Neighbor Program, and collaborations among service providers) likely made it easier for people to navigate bureaucracy.

This is a positive sign of progress – it suggests that targeted efforts to remove administrative barriers (like ID acquisition) are yielding results. It underscores that solving homelessness is not only about big policy changes or funding (though those are critical), but also about smoothing out the seemingly small, practical obstacles that can loom large in someone’s life. Simplifying processes, offering help with paperwork, and reducing administrative burden can directly translate into more people becoming “document-ready” for housing. **The Unhoused Strategy workgroup on Administrative Integration will be key to continuing this work of removing bureaucratic obstacles.**

HOUSING STABILITY

Housing is not just about placing a roof over someone’s head—it’s about helping them stay there. The 2024 survey results echo a truth long emphasized by both researchers and service providers: maintaining housing stability requires more than a lease and a key. It demands wraparound support, particularly for those who have faced long-term, repeated barriers to stable housing. In both 2023 and 2024, support paying rent was the most frequently selected need for staying housed, with nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents in 2024 identifying it as essential. This represents an 8% increase from the previous year.

“

Some of our overnight guests have waited so long for housing that they have lost hope of ever obtaining it again. We hear the stories each night over dinner of what their searches were like that day. The struggle to find a place to lay your head, even with a voucher in hand, has become overwhelming for those with PTSD and other conditions.

Sherry Cole, Program Coordinator for The Peace and Justice Center
(formerly Grand Valley Peace and Justice)

”

TERMINOLOGY

“High-barrier vs Low-Barrier”: In the context of services for people experiencing homelessness, the terms “high-barrier” and “low-barrier” refer to how easy or difficult it is to access services—not whether rules exist.

- **Low-Barrier Services** are designed to be easily accessible with minimal requirements for entry. These services aim to reduce obstacles such as identification requirements, sobriety, program participation, or criminal background checks. Importantly, low-barrier does not mean rule-free. Reasonable rules are still in place to ensure safety and respect for all participants and staff, but they are not used to restrict access.
- **High-Barrier Services** have stricter entry requirements that can unintentionally exclude individuals who need help the most. These may include sobriety mandates, extensive documentation, or compliance with certain conditions before accessing shelter, housing, or other resources.

There is substantial confusion around this terminology, often due to the misconception that “low-barrier” means a lack of structure or expectations. In reality, the distinction lies in whether barriers prevent people from getting in the door, not whether services maintain order once they’re inside.



The data also showed a striking difference between chronic and non-chronic respondents: 57% of chronic respondents selected rent support compared to just 17% of non-chronic respondents.

This disparity reflects how **long-term unhoused individuals are often more deeply impacted by structural poverty and rent burden, limiting their ability to stabilize even when housing is made available.** This aligns with national data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition (2023), which found that rent burden affects over 70% of extremely low-income renters.

Beyond rent, **other recurring needs in 2024 included transportation (64%), support paying for things outside of rent (58%), and employment (62%).** These priorities reflect not only financial fragility, but also the need for practical tools to regain independence and participate in community life.

Compared to non-chronic respondents, chronically unhoused individuals consistently selected more support needs across the board, particularly in categories tied to long-term vulnerability. **Chronic respondents were over four times more likely to request support for addiction recovery (16.46% vs. 2.53%), and over four times more likely to identify mental health support (27.85% vs. 6.33%) and physical health support (21.52% vs. 3.8%) as critical for maintaining housing.** These trends echo national studies estimating that 40% of unhoused individuals experience mental health conditions (SAMHSA, 2023) and support broader calls for trauma-informed housing models tailored to those with more complex needs.

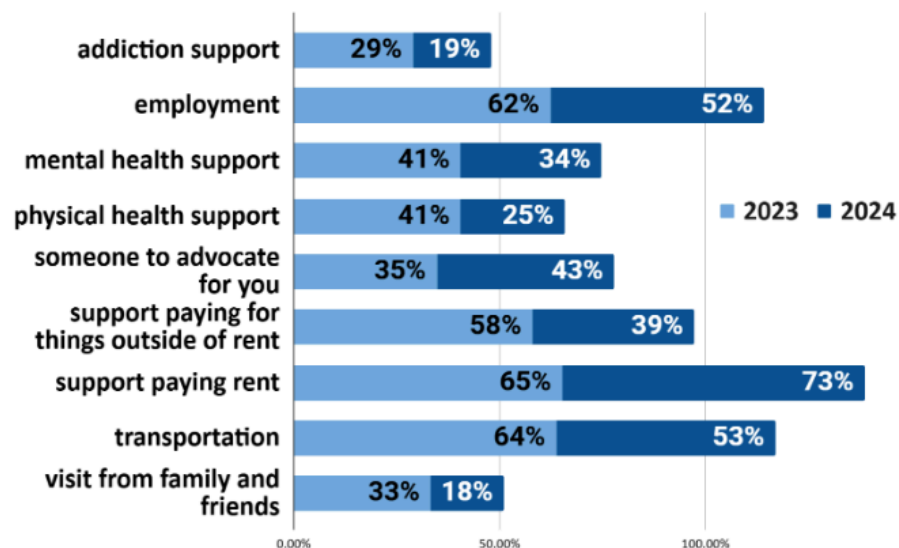
Chronically unhoused respondents were also more likely to select "someone to advocate for me" (32.91% vs. 10.13%). These responses often stem from compounding barriers—including past interactions with institutions, systemic mistrust, or a lack of social support networks. In particular, women were more likely than men to report advocacy needs, reflecting how intersecting issues like domestic violence, legal vulnerabilities, and childcare responsibilities disproportionately affect unhoused women (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2023). Meanwhile, employment remained a top response among both groups—but with notable differences.



LOCAL CHALLENGES

In Grand Junction, homelessness is shaped by a combination of broader structural issues and specific local dynamics. Key challenges include the mismatch between wages and rising housing costs, affordable and supportive housing supply, with even employed individuals unable to secure stable housing due to a lack of affordable units. Gaps in behavioral health services leave many without access to necessary treatment for mental illness or substance use, making housing retention more difficult. The erosion of the social safety net—such as limited disability benefits and long waitlists for assistance—further compounds vulnerability. Stigma and community resistance can slow the expansion of needed housing and services, while interactions with the justice system often create barriers to stability. While transportation did not explicitly rank as a top need, it remains a key underlying barrier – affecting access to employment, services, and housing opportunities.

What do you need to stay in housing? (2023 & 2024)



Employment support was selected by 39.24% of chronic respondents and only 12.66% of non-chronic individuals in 2024, indicating that job access is a meaningful aspiration but often difficult to achieve without foundational supports. These findings are consistent with HUD's 2021 Employment & Homelessness Report, which highlighted the difficulties PEH face in maintaining employment amid instability.

Notably, **the proportion of respondents citing addiction support as a housing retention need dropped from 28.99% in 2023 to 18.99% in 2024.** This decline may reflect shifts in prioritization—where housing affordability and mental health support now take precedence—or possibly growing access to addiction-related services through community health partners.

As in 2023, transportation remained a critical factor for stability, especially for chronic respondents. Rural and semi-rural geographies like Mesa County increase reliance on public systems like GVT, and for individuals facing medical appointments, job searches, or probation requirements, reliable transit can be the linchpin that keeps them housed. **This need was cited by 32.91% of chronic and 20.25% of non-chronic respondents in 2024, reinforcing transportation as a structural stabilizer.**

Finally, a smaller but growing percentage of respondents noted "visits from friends or family" (33% in 2024, up from 18% in 2023) as helpful for housing retention. While less commonly cited overall, this increase points to the social dimensions of housing stability—how staying housed isn't only about money or services, but about feeling connected and supported.

The City and its partners are actively addressing these inequities and gaps through coordinated local action, targeted systemic change, and the ongoing implementation of the Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan. These efforts, led by the nine workgroups, continue to be strengthened and expanded to create lasting impact. It is clear that momentum is building, and sustained effort is needed to keep the ball rolling. Likewise, advocating for more state and federal resources (for vouchers, for treatment, for affordable housing development) is necessary because local government alone cannot fix wages or build enough housing without outside investment.

LOCAL PROGRESS

While significant challenges remain, Grand Junction is also positioned with several encouraging structural advantages and initiatives that support progress in addressing homelessness.

- **Improved Access to Services:** Fewer respondents this year cited unmet basic needs (food, hygiene) as top priorities, suggesting that services like the Resource Center are making an impact. The decline in need for help with IDs and documents suggests our community navigation efforts are working. These are tangible improvements in the system that have occurred in the past year. A significant increase in individuals added to the By Name List reflects both a strong community-wide effort by service providers and a growing willingness among people experiencing homelessness to engage with services – demonstrating that many are actively taking the necessary steps to access housing and support.
- **Increased Awareness of Resources:** Respondents in 2024 showed greater knowledge of available programs (housing vouchers, etc.). This implies outreach and information-sharing improved. People can't use help they don't know about – so better awareness is progress.
- **Policy Momentum:** Since the last survey, the City adopted the Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan (July 2024) and the Housing Strategy Update 2024 (Oct 2024). These mark significant progress at the policy level. There is now an official road map with specific strategies, workgroups formed, and measurable goals (like the 3% housing growth target) to tackle the issues that the surveys have identified. This alignment of data to policy action is progress in itself – it means the community is moving from understanding the problem to implementing solutions. For example, City Council's adoption of these plans and dedicating resources (as noted, millions in funding leveraged for housing) is a concrete step forward.
- **Funding Momentum:** The community has shown a clear commitment to addressing homelessness, with the City allocating and securing over \$22 million in funding through grants and other resources between 2022 and 2025—a substantial investment in housing and support initiatives.
- **New Collaborations:** The community has a strong collaborative environment, many agencies are working together evidenced by the multi-partner Unhoused Needs Assessment and the community-wide Unhoused Strategies & Implementation Plan. Moreover, the establishment of nine workgroups under the Implementation Plan has brought a wide array of stakeholders together. Seven of these workgroups launched in mid-2024, covering: Administrative Integration, Funding & Resource Stewardship, Outreach & Basic Needs, Access & Mobility, Housing Stability, Data Analysis, Policy & Public Engagement, and Community Resilience & Public Health (An additional advisory group of people with lived experience of homelessness is also being formed.). The very act of having these focused teams is progress – it creates accountability and momentum. Already, these groups have begun meeting to set action steps, whether that's streamlining referral processes or identifying potential sites for new housing.
- **Functional Zero Goal:** By aligning with the Built for Zero framework and explicitly aiming for functional zero homelessness, Grand Junction has adopted a best-practice goal. Functional zero doesn't mean no one will ever become homeless, but that the community will have a responsive system to quickly help anyone who does, so that homelessness is rare and brief. Embracing this goal (and joining statewide efforts) is itself a forward step that commits the city to outcome-focused work.
- **Interim Housing Code Updated:** A key finding from the Unhoused Needs Assessment highlighted that many unsheltered individuals currently have no safe or stable place to stay, increasing their vulnerability and exposure to harsh conditions. In response to this urgent need, the City approved an interim housing code designed to allow for more innovative and flexible non-congregate shelter options throughout the community. This change aims to expand shelter capacity beyond traditional congregate settings, offering safer, more dignified, and accessible alternatives that better meet the diverse needs of those experiencing homelessness. Through an anticipated 2025 Request for Proposals (RFP) focused on funding homeless and housing solutions, the City is hopeful that new options will emerge to expand the continuum of shelter and housing.
- **Increased Housing Units:** The City's goal to increase affordable housing production by 3% annually is ambitious—and early results are promising. In the first year alone, production rose approximately 177% over previous years, with another significant increase anticipated in the second year. These gains reflect major progress toward reducing homelessness.



The Neighbor 2 Neighbor Team with many partners gathered to outreach to encampments and to refer individuals to resources





Local agencies and City Staff host a bike clinic for unhoused individuals at the Resource Center

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The 2024 Unhoused Needs Survey reinforces key findings from 2023: homelessness in Grand Junction is a complex, local issue driven by housing affordability, unmet health needs, and systemic gaps. Most individuals experiencing homelessness are long-time residents who seek stability, connection, and support—but face persistent barriers. The common myth that people are drawn here for services is not supported by the data. Our focus should remain on supporting members of our own community through increased access to services and housing. While affordability is at the heart of the crisis, housing alone is not enough—particularly for those who have experienced long-term homelessness. Continued progress will require both supportive services and sustained investment. Fewer respondents cited lack of documentation or information as a barrier, indicating that improved coordination is making a difference. Community engagement and education remain essential, and addressing homelessness will take the collective effort of residents, businesses, and civic groups. Improved access to basic services, growing awareness of resources, and stronger system coordination through the City's Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan and active community collaboration, Grand Junction is making meaningful strides. **Continued focus on expanding deeply affordable housing, strengthening support services, and engaging the broader public will be essential to sustain progress and move closer to a future where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.**

Looking ahead to the 2025 Unhoused Needs Survey, we aim to implement the lessons learned. We will strive for a larger and more inclusive sample (reaching youth, families, and others), perhaps reinstituting incentives to boost participation. We will likely add questions on emerging topics (for instance, how many have attempted to access safe parking or would use it if available, or more detail on employment barriers). We will also be able to measure the impact of the new initiatives launched in 2024. By then, some new housing should be online, the workgroups will have had time to implement solutions, and hopefully the PIT count or other measures might show a slowing or reduction of homelessness growth.

Grand Junction's comprehensive approach – **aligning data, community input, strategic planning, and on-the-ground action – is grounds for optimism.** It is rare for a city of our size to have conducted a rigorous needs assessment, followed it with annual surveys, and stood up a structured implementation framework in such a short time. **This reflects both the urgency of the issue and the commitment of city leadership and community partners.** As this report shows, there is no single cause or simple fix for homelessness in our area, but there is a clear direction: increase housing options, bolster support services, and remove barriers, all while keeping the humanity of those affected at the forefront.

In conclusion, the 2024 Unhoused Needs Survey Report confirms that we are on the right track with our strategies, even as it calls for sustained and expanded efforts. **The challenges identified are being actively addressed by the collaborative work underway, but much work remains.** By continuing to ground our policies in data and lived experience, and by fostering collaboration through the Implementation Plan workgroups, Grand Junction is building a path toward the Comprehensive Plan's vision: a city where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring, and where **"people of all income levels can meet their needs and have access to amenities that provide for a meaningful, high-quality life."** With ongoing dedication, resources, and compassion, we move closer to the day when every Grand Junction resident has a place to call home.



APPENDIX A –SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Developing the Survey

The 2024 Unhoused Needs Survey built on the 2023 foundation with a refined approach to deepen insights, broaden participation, and address previous gaps. A major change was shifting from provider- or volunteer-administered surveys in 2023 to primarily self-administered surveys in 2024. While this allowed for greater privacy and reach—potentially reducing social desirability bias—it also raised concerns around accessibility and question interpretation.

To improve clarity and accuracy, the 2024 survey featured simplified language, expanded multiple-choice options, and new questions based on lessons from the previous year. As with all self-reported data, limitations such as recall bias and underrepresentation of hard-to-reach populations remain.

The survey design drew from nationally recognized models, including those by the RAND Corporation, UC San Francisco’s BHHI, and Portland State University. These established frameworks ensured methodological rigor and alignment with the City’s systems-thinking approach to understanding homelessness and shaping long-term housing strategies.

Partners & Collaborators

Survey development and distribution were made possible by continued collaboration across academic, public health, and direct service networks. The following partners were instrumental in shaping and implementing both the 2023 and 2024 survey efforts:

- Mesa County Public Health – Research & Planning Team
- Dr. Stephen Merino – Colorado Mesa University (Sociology)
- Jan Moorman – Retired Ethnographic Researcher
- Portland State University – Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative
- Local Service Providers: Grand Valley Peace & Justice; Catholic Outreach; HomewardBound of the Grand Valley; Hilltop Community Resources; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

These partners contributed feedback on question design, outreach strategies, accessibility, and ethics, helping ensure the survey reflected both academic rigor and community realities. Their involvement exemplifies the cross-sector commitment in Grand Junction to understanding and addressing homelessness.

Conducting the Survey

Building on the refined methodology, the 2024 survey was conducted through a mix of in-person outreach and self-administered questionnaires, aiming to capture a diverse cross-section of the unhoused population in Grand Junction.

Surveyor & Administration:

Led by Sherry Price (Housing Specialist, City of Grand Junction), the 2024 effort differed from 2023 by using a single dedicated surveyor to ensure consistency. Respondents completed the survey independently, with Sherry available for assistance. This approach improved privacy and likely encouraged more honest responses but may have affected understanding of some questions.

Survey Period:

Surveys were collected from July 22 to August 9, 2024.

Locations & Reach:

Surveys were distributed at high-traffic service sites such as the Resource Center, Catholic Outreach, and the Joseph Center, as well as in outdoor encampments. While this outreach reached a broad population, some groups—such as unaccompanied youth, people living in vehicles, or those couch-surfing—were likely underrepresented. Capturing these voices is a goal for future surveys.

Incentives:

Unlike 2023, which offered small incentives (e.g., \$10 gift cards), no incentives were provided in 2024. While this reduced costs and ensured voluntary participation, it may have lowered response rates, particularly among individuals with urgent survival needs. Future efforts may reconsider incentives to support participation equity.

Response Count:

A total of 90 surveys were completed, exceeding the target of 74. While this sample represents only a portion of the local unhoused population, the responses offer meaningful insights and highlight patterns that complement higher-level data.

Confidentiality:

Some respondents voluntarily provided contact information for service connection or follow-up. All data in this report is aggregated or anonymized, and confidentiality protocols were strictly followed to ensure participants felt safe and protected throughout the process.

Analyzing the Data

After the survey period concluded, all paper surveys were collected and digitized by Housing Division staff, with Senior Administrative Assistant Keli Sheridan overseeing data entry. Analysis of the compiled dataset was led by AmeriCorps CivicSpark Fellow Augusto Latorre, with support from data consultant Shae-Lynn Watt (formerly of Mesa County Public Health), as well as Housing Specialist Sherry Price and Housing Manager Ashley Chambers.

Given the relatively small sample size (90 responses), readers should use caution in generalizing percentages to the entire unhoused population. The conditions of outreach, the self-selection of participants, and the underrepresentation of



APPENDIX A –SURVEY METHODOLOGY CONTINUED

certain groups (notably youth, as discussed) can all influence the results. Wherever relevant, we contextualize the quantitative findings with qualitative insights and flag where certain populations (e.g. Hispanic families, youth, people living in vehicles) may be under-sampled or absent. Rather than viewing these statistics as definitive population metrics, it is more useful to interpret them as indicators of trends, needs, and issues reported by the survey participants.

Throughout the analysis, we compare 2024 data to the previous year's findings to identify notable changes. When we observe differences, we discuss possible explanations – whether due to actual shifts in the homeless community's situation or as a result of changes in survey methods and outreach. In some cases, improvements in services may cause a decline in reported need (for example, if more people have access to showers now, fewer list it as a top need). In other cases, worsening economic or social factors may be reflected in higher reported need or new challenges.

Survey Refinements & Future Considerations

The 2024 survey experience highlighted key improvements made since 2023 and pointed to opportunities for further enhancing data quality, inclusivity, and impact in future iterations:

- **Survey Refinements:** Updates in 2024 – including clearer wording on questions, expanded multiple-choice options, and added questions on income and benefits – yielded richer data and fewer ambiguous responses. These refinements built directly on feedback from last year's participants and partners. Future surveys should continue to evolve based on community and stakeholder input. For instance, developing a Spanish-language version of the survey would improve accessibility, and adding new topics (such as disability status or detailed health information) could capture additional important aspects of homelessness.
- **Outreach & Inclusion:** The self-administered format in 2024 appeared to increase honesty in responses (respondents may have felt more comfortable disclosing sensitive information privately). However, it may have posed barriers for participants with limited literacy or those not fluent in English. In the future, a hybrid approach could be beneficial – for example, offering assistance or an interviewer for those who need it, while still allowing privacy for those who prefer it. Additionally, partnering with organizations that serve underrepresented groups (youth, LGBTQ+ individuals, people living in vehicles, etc.) during the outreach phase could improve the reach and equity of the survey sample. Targeted efforts to include these voices will ensure the survey paints a more complete picture of the unhoused community.

Looking ahead, these considerations will guide the planning of the 2025 survey. Continuous improvement of the survey process will help Grand Junction build a robust, year-by-year dataset to inform policy – one that is inclusive of all who experience homelessness, and sensitive to how we ask questions and gather information.

Representation Gaps

While the survey offers valuable insights, it's important to acknowledge whom it might have missed and what structural factors underpin the observed trends.

Underrepresented Groups: As discussed in the methodology, the 2024 survey likely under-sampled certain subpopulations of the unhoused community:

- **Youth (under 25):** We did not specifically reach out to youth programs, and minors were generally not part of this survey. Youth experiencing homelessness (often couch-surfing or in unstable family situations) have different challenges, such as school disruption or vulnerability to exploitation. Their absence here is a gap.
- **Families with Children:** Similarly, families tend to seek help from places like HomewardBound's family shelter or through Department of Human Services, which might not have been captured in our survey venues. Family homelessness is present in Mesa County (school districts identify dozens of homeless students each year), but their voices are not prominent in this data.
- **People living in vehicles:** Some individuals or families live in their cars or RVs, which can be somewhat hidden. Our survey got a few, but not many. They might have unique needs like vehicle repairs, fuel, and legal parking.
- **People experiencing domestic violence:** Those fleeing domestic violence often access shelter through different channels (e.g., Hilltop's Latimer House) and may not identify as "homeless" in the same way. We suspect some portion of the "other" reasons for homelessness (in the prior section) relates to domestic violence, but it wasn't explicitly captured unless they volunteered it.
- **Rural homelessness:** Our focus was Grand Junction proper, but Mesa County has homelessness in smaller communities (like Fruita, Palisade, Clifton) which might not be fully represented. The UHNA identified Fruita and the SE area (Clifton/Riverside) as having high risk of homelessness. Those areas might have people doubling up in trailers or living in cars that we didn't reach.



The UHNA (2023) identified 5 key needs:

- 1. Shortage of affordable housing.
- 2. Shelter and housing options for acute needs.
- 3. Housing instability and displacement.
- 4. Access to supportive services and basic needs.
- 5. System Improvement, coordination, and collaboration.

The Unhoused Strategies aim to achieve seven key strategic objectives:
(Each specific objective aligns with one or more overarching strategies)

- 1 Reduce the number of people experiencing houselessness.
- 2 Reduce the length of time individuals remain unhoused.
- 3 Reduce the number of people who enter first-time houselessness.
- 4 Reduce the number of people who return to houselessness.
- 5 Increase the number of people entering permanent housing.
- 6 Increase successful placements of people of unsheltered PEH into both transitional and permanent housing.
- 7 Increase successful referrals to behavioral health treatment and supportive services.

APPENDIX B

UNHOUSED STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

To view the full plan & action steps here:



<https://www.gjcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/13576/Unhoused-StrategyImplementation-Plan?bidId=>

The Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan builds upon the findings of the Unhoused Needs Assessment (UHNA) by JG Research and the Unhoused Strategy Report, transforming initial insights into a comprehensive, community-wide approach. The plan addresses critical gaps and immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness (PEH) in the Grand Junction area, with the shared goal of achieving Functional Zero. It outlines seven key strategic outcomes that support a systemic response to prevent homelessness, reduce its duration, and improve access to shelter, services, and permanent housing. Envisioning an integrated, adaptable, and interconnected service network, the plan promotes restoration, stability, and self-determination for all individuals, regardless of their economic or social status. It emphasizes collaboration across jurisdictions, business sectors, non-profits, faith-based groups, philanthropy, and both housed and unhoused individuals. Designed as a dynamic working document, it supports ongoing strategy implementation, goal tracking, and periodic updates as community needs evolve.

UNHOUSED STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1 ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY-WIDE FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING THE COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM OF CARE PROCESSES

STRATEGY 2 ESTABLISH A FLEXIBLE CITY-COUNTY HOUSING FUND TO SUPPORT HOUSING SECURITY AND INCREASE COLLABORATION BETWEEN SERVICES

STRATEGY 3 INCREASE ACCESS TO PREVENTION, DIVERSION, AND HOUSING NAVIGATION

STRATEGY 4 EXPAND ACCESSIBILITY TO BASIC NEEDS AND HYGIENE

STRATEGY 5 EXPAND MENTAL HEALTH CARE, HEALTHCARE AND SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT SERVICE OPTIONS

STRATEGY 6 INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY AND EXPAND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO PEH

STRATEGY 7 INCREASE NON-MARKET HOUSING OPTIONS INCLUDING INTERIM HOUSING & SHELTER UNITS



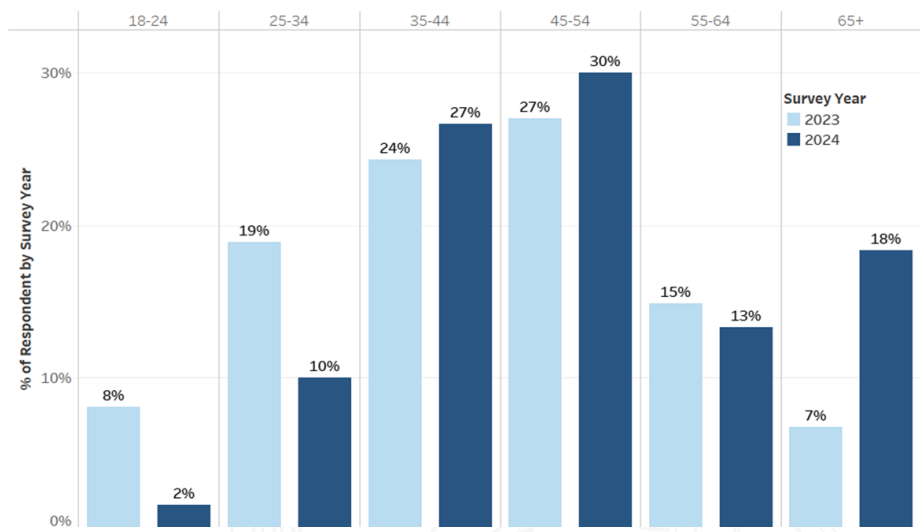
APPENDIX C - CHARACTERISTICS & EXPERIENCES OF PEH IN THE GRAND JUNCTION AREA

Demographics

Gender : In 2024, 53 of the 90 survey respondents were male, 36 were female, and a few individuals identified as non-binary or declined to state. Gender identity followed a similar distribution to previous years, though 2024 saw a notable absence of self-identified non-binary individuals. While this could be due to low sampling, it may also reflect broader issues such as discomfort with disclosing identity in stigmatized environments. 53% of respondents identified as men, 36% as women, and no respondents identified as non-binary.

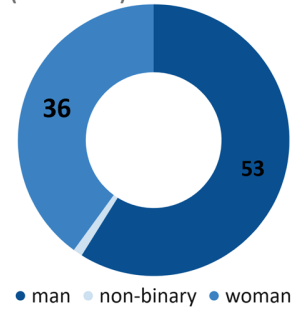
Household: Most respondents were adults without dependent children currently with them. Only a handful of surveyed PEH were part of family units with children, which may indicate that unhoused families are underrepresented in the survey or seeking assistance through other channels.

Age Distribution (2023 & 2024 side-by-side)



However, in the preliminary 2025 Point-in-Time (PIT) count, only 8.8% of individuals identified as veterans, representing a 30.7% decrease since the 2019 PIT. Nationally, the 2023 HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress reported a 55% reduction in veteran homelessness since 2010, driven by increased funding, coordinated system-wide efforts, and strategic policy initiatives across federal, state, and local levels.

Gender (2024 Totals)

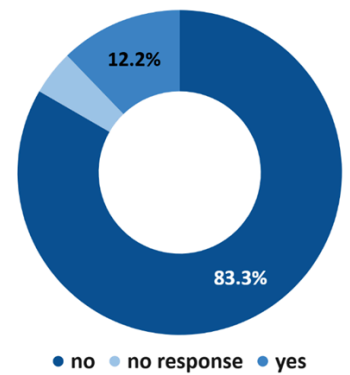


Age and the “Graying” of Homelessness:

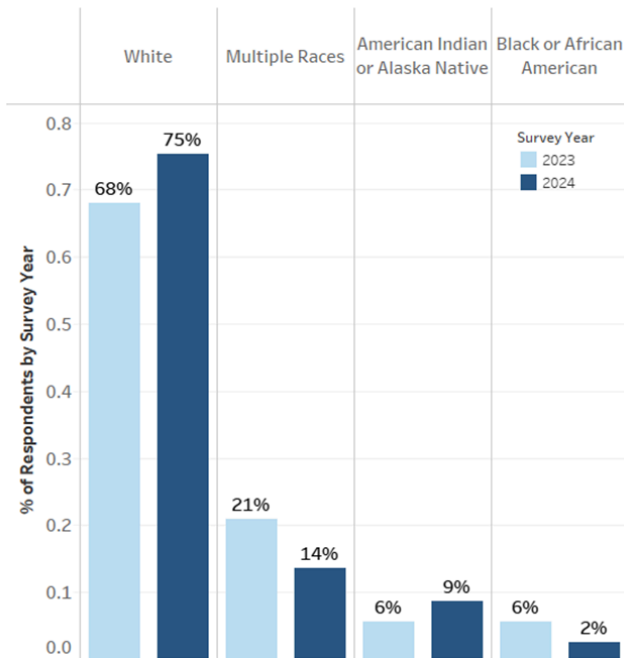
The 2024 data show a notable shift toward an older respondent base. Individuals aged 45 and older accounted for 62% of survey respondents, a significant increase from 48% in 2023. This aligns with a growing national trend of “graying homelessness,” where more than half of unhoused adults in the U.S. are over 50. Grand Junction’s local trend reflects both demographic aging and deepening economic vulnerability: older adults living on fixed incomes are increasingly unable to keep pace with rising rents and home prices, leaving them just one setback away from housing loss. In fact, 62% of PEH in Mesa County are age 45+ - nearly double the statewide average - underscoring how heavily homelessness here is impacting older residents. These findings also underscore the need to ensure housing solutions meet both the economic and health-related needs of older residents. Local service providers (including the Joseph Center, Catholic Outreach, and Mutual Aid Partners) report a visible rise in seniors seeking housing-related support, aligning with our data that older adults are a growing portion of those in need.

Veteran Status: When asked about veteran status, 12.2% of respondents reported having served in the military—nearly double the Colorado state average of 7% (Colorado Coalition for the Homeless). This elevated rate likely reflects successful local outreach efforts targeting veterans, who often have more direct access to services through programs like HUD-VASH.

Have you served in the Military? (2024)



Race distribution



Race and Ethnicity: The majority of respondents in both years identified as White/Caucasian, which is unsurprising given that over 85% of Mesa County’s general population is White. However, people of color were still present among those surveyed, including individuals identifying as Native American, Hispanic/Latino, and African American. The share of non-white respondents (around 15%) is somewhat lower than the disproportionate representation of people of color observed in homelessness nationally. This likely reflects *under-sampling* in our survey rather than an absence of racial disparities. Research consistently shows that people of color are disproportionately impacted by homelessness even when they are underrepresented in point-in-time surveys. In Mesa County, for instance, Native American and Black residents make up a small fraction of the overall population but a higher fraction of those seeking homelessness services than their population share. Our findings point to potential representation gaps in our outreach – for example, Hispanic families and migrants might not have been fully reached – and highlight structural inequities that make homelessness more prevalent among minority groups including cultural stigma, language access issues, and a preference for informal or doubled-up housing arrangements that may go uncounted in formal outreach. We acknowledge these gaps and aim to improve outreach to underrepresented racial/ethnic groups in future surveys.

Chronic vs. Non-Chronic Homelessness

Age Disparity: Chronic homelessness disproportionately impacts older adults in our sample. In 2024, a striking 58% of chronically unhoused respondents were over age 45, compared to only 27% of the non-chronic group in that age range. In other words, older individuals were much more likely to be in the long-term homeless category. This mirrors statewide and national patterns – older adults are a growing segment of the chronic homeless population – but the local rise is particularly steep. The year-over-year data showed that the share of non-chronic respondents over 45 grew nearly 39%, suggesting more older adults are falling into homelessness across the board, not just in chronic cases. Still, chronic homelessness skews older, which may be because it takes years for some to exhaust all options. It could also be that younger people find exits more quickly or are not captured as much in our survey (especially youth under 25, who were underrepresented).

Local Connection: Both chronic and non-chronic groups mostly have local roots, but an even higher percentage of chronically homeless folks reported long-term ties to the area. Many chronic respondents have cycled through local institutions (jail, hospitals) or lived in the region for many years before becoming homeless. This reinforces that our chronic homelessness issue is local people stuck in homelessness, not an influx from elsewhere.

Service Utilization: As noted, chronic respondents reported engaging with an average of 5.18 support organizations, versus 2.85 for non-chronic. This indicates that those in long-term homelessness are accessing a patchwork of services – shelter, soup kitchen, medical clinic, food pantry, case management, etc. Despite accessing more services, they remain homeless, implying that either the services aren’t sufficient to resolve their situation or there are gaps (like no housing available after they complete a program). Non-chronic individuals, especially newly homeless, might only touch one or two agencies (perhaps just a shelter and a food bank) before they self-resolve or disappear from view.

Health and Benefits: We found significant differences in health needs and benefit enrollment. For example, chronically homeless respondents were four times more likely to identify mental health support and physical health support as critical to maintaining housing (about 28% for chronic vs 6% for non-chronic for mental health; 22% vs 4% for physical health). Chronic homelessness often either stems from or exacerbates health problems. Many chronic PEH have disabilities or chronic illnesses; some qualify for disability benefits. Our data showed many were not yet on those benefits, however. Only 87.5% of respondents eligible for Medicare (age 65+ or disabled) reported being enrolled, compared to a ~95% national average. And enrollment in Medicaid (for those under 65) was also lower than one would expect given Colorado’s Medicaid expansion – indicating some are not accessing healthcare coverage they could use. These gaps likely tie to documentation issues or lack of help navigating the systems. They represent an opportunity: ensuring every chronically homeless individual is enrolled in benefits like Medicaid/Medicare and food assistance (SNAP) could improve their stability and access to care.

Veteran Status: A subset of respondents identified as veterans. Veterans often have additional resources available (VA housing vouchers, VA healthcare), yet some still experience homelessness. The chronic homeless veteran population is a focus of national Built for Zero efforts. While our sample size is small, we did note that veterans in our survey tended to have higher rates of chronic homelessness than non-veterans (many have service-related trauma or disabilities). The City and partners like the VA and Welcome Home Alliance are working toward achieving “functional zero” for veteran homelessness, and survey insights can help by identifying remaining barriers for vets (which often mirror the general ones: housing affordability, mental health, etc., plus sometimes discharge status issues).



Families and Youth: Chronic homelessness is less common in families with children and youth populations; those tend to be episodic. Indeed, very few survey respondents in 2024 were part of a family with minor children or were unaccompanied youth, and none of those fell under chronic. This doesn't mean family and youth homelessness doesn't exist here; it means those groups might be accessing different systems (e.g., family shelters, school district McKinney-Vento services, or youth programs like The House). It points to a limitation of our survey outreach and suggests partnering with those programs next year to ensure their clients' voices are included.

Living in Mesa County

A persistent belief in the community is that many people experiencing homelessness (PEH) in Mesa County arrived here from elsewhere — often bused in or drawn by the area's services. However, survey findings from both 2023 and 2024 continue to challenge this assumption.

The majority of respondents reported strong preexisting ties to the area. When asked what initially brought them to Mesa County, the top responses across both years were:

Chronic vs. Non-Chronic Differences

When looking more closely at chronic vs. non-chronic respondents, additional patterns emerge:

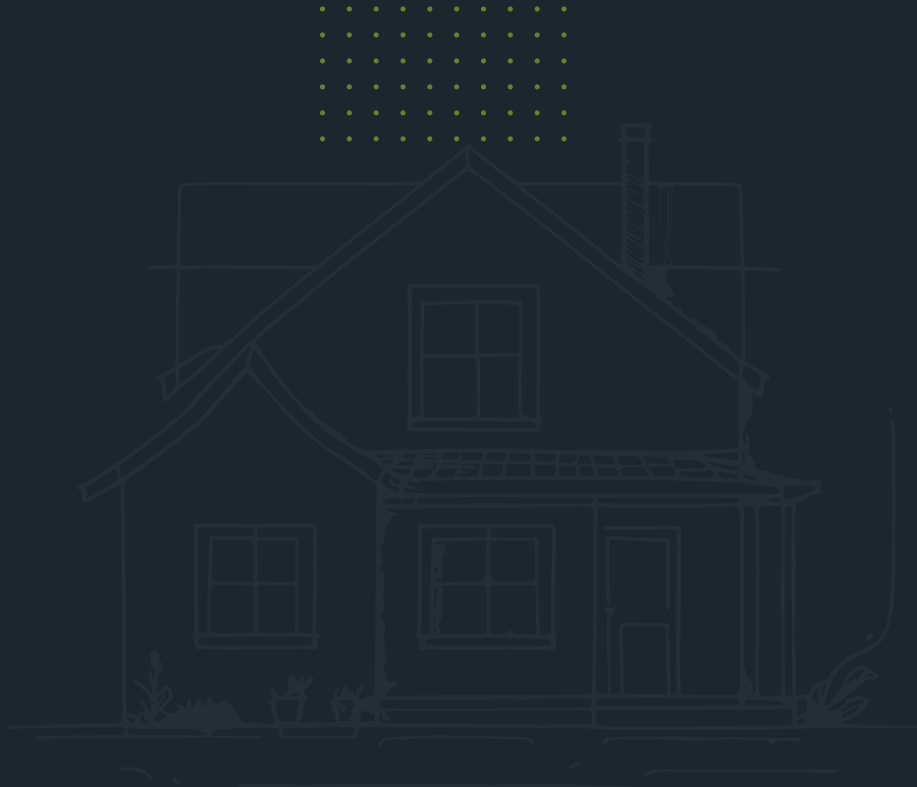
- Chronic respondents were especially likely to cite family/friend ties or growing up in the area as the reason they were in Mesa County.
- Nearly 90% of chronic respondents reported some form of prior connection to the region.
- Non-chronic respondents had a slightly more diverse set of responses, but still primarily reported personal or family ties rather than service-related reasons.
- Of the 19 respondents who cited services or being bused as the reason they came to Mesa County, only 7 were chronic.

These findings reinforce the idea that many unhoused individuals are long-time members of the community who became unhoused here — not transplants from elsewhere. This distinction is crucial: it highlights the need to invest in local, long-term housing solutions rather than focusing on restrictive eligibility or access based on how or why someone arrived.

What Brought you Mesa County? Top 5 (2023 & 2024)	Total	Percent
1. Grew up in the area	48	29.3%
2. Relatives & friends in the area	36	22.0%
3. Other	26	15.9%
4. Left behind and couldn't leave	15	9.2%
5. Bused from another location	13	7.9%

*"other" responses often described previous housing, employment, or familial ties to the area





Contact Us :



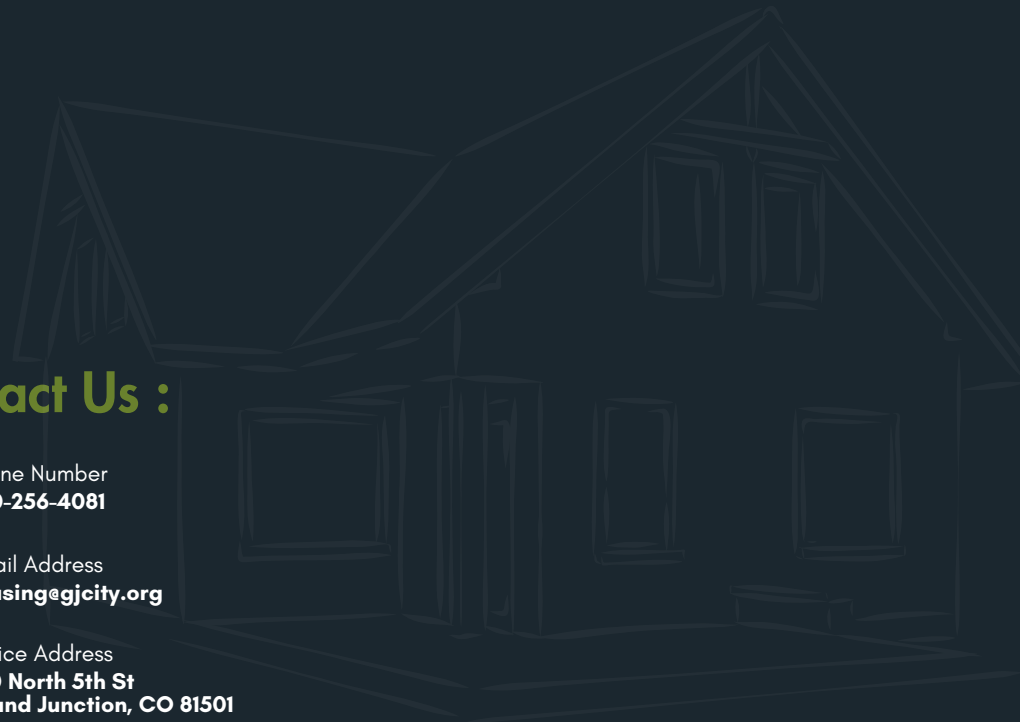
Phone Number
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Office Address
**250 North 5th St
Grand Junction, CO 81501**





2024 UNHOUSED

Strategy & Implementation Plan

KEY INPUT FROM:

Mesa County Homeless Coalition

Mesa County Collaborative for the
Unhoused (MCCUH)

Scott Aker, Grand Junction Housing
Authority/MCCUH Chair

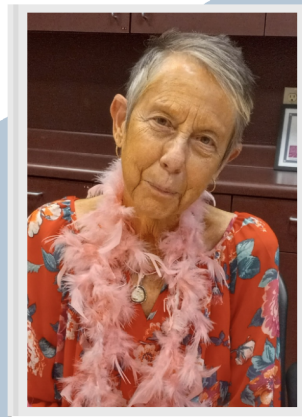
Sherry Price, City of Grand Junction/MCCUH
Vice-Chair

Beverly Lampley, Grand Valley Catholic
Outreach/MCCUH Secretary/Treasurer

Cathy Story, Quality Health Network/MCCUH
Representative/Community Collaboration

Stephania Vasconez, Mutual Aid Partners

Ashley Chambers, City of Grand Junction



IN MEMORY BEVERLY LAMPLEY

Beverly's dedication to supporting the unhoused and those living in poverty in Grand Junction inspired us all. Her leadership and voice were instrumental to the development of the Unhoused Strategies & Implementation Plan. Her compassion and tireless efforts transformed countless lives, offering hope and dignity to those who needed it most. Beverly's legacy is a powerful reminder of the profound impact one person can have through selfless service and unwavering dedication, and her spirit will continue to inspire and guide us.

THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED WITH FUNDING FROM:



GRAND
JUNCTION
HOUSING
AUTHORITY



COLORADO
Department of Local Affairs

The UHNA (2023) identified 5 key needs:

1. Shortage of affordable housing.
2. Shelter and housing options for acute needs.
3. Housing instability and displacement.
4. Access to supportive services and basic needs.
5. System Improvement, coordination, and collaboration.

The Unhoused Strategies aim to achieve seven key strategic objectives: (Each specific objective aligns with one or more overarching strategies)

- 1 Reduce the number of people experiencing houselessness.
- 2 Reduce the length of time individuals remain unhoused.
- 3 Reduce the number of people who enter first-time houselessness.
- 4 Reduce the number of people who return to houselessness.
- 5 Increase the number of people entering permanent housing.
- 6 Increase successful placements of people of unsheltered PEH into both transitional and permanent housing.
- 7 Increase successful referrals to behavioral health treatment and supportive services.

Executive SUMMARY

The Unhoused Strategy & Implementation Plan builds upon the research conducted by JG Research in the Unhoused Needs Assessment (UHNA). It enhances the initial findings outlined in the Unhoused Strategy Report, transforming them into a comprehensive community-wide plan.

This plan is aimed at addressing critical gaps and meeting the immediate needs (identified in the UHNA & outlined on the left) of individuals experiencing homelessness (PEH) in the Grand Junction area, aligning with the overarching community objective of achieving Functional Zero.

The plan strives to achieve seven key strategic outcomes (enumerated on the left), ensuring a systemic response that prevents homelessness, minimizes its occurrence, and expedites access to shelter, services, and a pathway toward stable permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness.

Furthermore, the plan envisions an integrated, adaptable, and interconnected service network that promotes restoration, stability, and self-determination for all individuals, irrespective of their economic or social status and wherever they reside in the community.

Moreover, it prioritizes meeting the needs of all residents through collaborative efforts across various jurisdictions, business sectors, faith-based and non-profit organizations, philanthropic groups, and both housed and unhoused individuals. Only through these unified efforts, guided by a clear strategy, can the response necessary for the community to thrive be created.

Designed as a dynamic working document, this plan facilitates the tracking of goals and the implementation of strategies over time and will be updated as needed.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO END HOUSELESSNESS

As highlighted in both the Unhoused Needs Assessment and Unhoused Strategies, there are significant gaps in the current response to the houseless crisis in the Grand Junction area, hindering the ability to adequately meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness (PEH). The Unhoused Strategies and the Implementation Plan present an opportunity to establish a more effective system that addresses the needs of the unhoused community and focuses on preventing households from becoming houseless. Essential tools for implementing this plan include community engagement, collaborative planning, incorporating a diverse range of experiences and expertise, and actively involving individuals with lived experience.

ACHIEVING FUNCTIONAL ZERO

This plan aims to achieve "functional zero," ensuring immediate access to services and housing for anyone experiencing houselessness. It's a widely-used approach across the US, with 14 communities successfully ending houselessness for target populations and 44 witnessing reductions. In 2019, the Homeless Coalition, on behalf of 43 local service agencies, government entities, and community members, pledged to transition into a "Built for Zero" community.

Key elements of becoming a "Built for Zero" community include maintaining a comprehensive list of individuals experiencing homelessness, coordinating efforts among agencies, measuring success at the community level, and making data-driven investments in housing resources. Individual programs are held accountable for client outcomes, with a focus on the overarching goal of ending houselessness.

EXISTING PLANS

Significant initiatives are currently ongoing in the community to enhance the region's crisis response system, with a particular emphasis on refining specific components of the response. However, there lacks a unified plan that comprehensively integrates and coordinates these efforts. The Strategy & Implementation Plan aims to address this gap by consolidating various smaller plans and initiatives into one cohesive strategy. It seeks to ensure that connections within the system are established to sustain housing, encompassing factors such as employment, basic needs, mental and behavioral health, transportation, and community support.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Addressing houselessness requires a response that acknowledges its complexity, but at its core lies a fundamental issue: the Grand Junction area lacks sufficient affordable housing, particularly for households earning less than 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

High housing costs often result in households becoming cost-burdened, paying more than 30% of their income on housing. While increasing housing opportunities is crucial in ending houselessness, it's not the sole solution. To enable individuals to access and maintain housing, the crisis response system must collaborate with service providers, local developers, faith organizations, and municipal housing strategy implementation efforts.

In 2021, the City of Grand Junction adopted the Grand Junction Housing Strategy, which includes provisions for providing housing and services to the unhoused. However, addressing the need for low-cost housing requires attention to retaining and developing housing options that cater to individual needs of the . Without access to sustainable housing, the crisis response system cannot effectively transition households out of houselessness.

PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

Modeled after The Collaborative Community Response Initiative (CCRI), this framework is designed to be complex, adaptive, and a system response to the disparities in well-being that supports evidence-based individual interventions that are delivered in an integrated, coherent and person-centered framework.

Phase Two: **ACTION PLANS**

Ad-hoc workgroup expands into an Implementation Action Team to:

- Assign members of the action team to lead subject-specific workgroups.
- Identify additional subject matter experts to participate in correlated workgroups
- Workgroups launch and develop next steps, timeline, baseline, and key performance indicators for implementation of each assigned action related to specific strategy.

Phase Four: **MONITOR & TRACK**

Workgroups will:

- Regularly monitor and evaluate the progress
- Track key metrics to measure success and identify areas that need improvement
- Report to lead

Lead Team will:

- Communicate and compile information to present for public, council, etc.

Phase One: **FRAMEWORK**

An Initial ad-hoc workgroup met to:

- Identify contributors and cultivate community consensus.
- Develop action team and identify subject specific workgroup categories to include existing community workgroups.
- Determine key steps for plan development and establish a framework for implementation.
- Create a timeline of major milestones for implementation.
- Establish a monitoring and implementation structure.

Phase Three: **IMPLEMENT**

Workgroups will:

- Do the work and implement action plans
- Keep stakeholders informed of the progress of the plan
- Coordinate efforts across subject matter workgroups and communicate to correlated Action Team Lead.

Phase Five: **ADAPT & ADJUST**

Action Team through workgroups regularly:

- Adapt implementation plan as needed; particularly as new information becomes available or circumstances change, be prepared to adjust the plan accordingly to ensure its success.



IMPLEMENTATION ACTION TEAM

Coordination is essential for a successful regional response to homelessness and must encompass effective leadership, a shared vision, a comprehensive plan, a governing structure, utilization of data, and a framework for sustained effectiveness.

The Implementation Action Team will:

- Provide Shared Vision, & Transparency
- Emphasize Performance and Accountability
- Facilitate Coordination Among Partners
- Ensure involvement of Experts and Stakeholders Representing a Diverse set of Viewpoints and Experiences
- Coordinate the Collection, Analysis and Integration of Data
- Provide quarterly and annual reports available to the public

STRUCTURE

The structure of the Implementation Action Team is circular, with different layers representing various roles and responsibilities. The outer circle consists of the leadership team representing both the Inter-Governmental Task Force and MCCUH. While there is an overlap in membership, each entity fulfills distinct roles, providing support, and serving as catalysts to propel the work forward. Moving inward, the workgroups, led by members of the leadership team, are subject matter-focused and designed to support specific key actions under each strategy. Workgroups may contain additional community members and subject matter experts. While some strategies may require multiple work groups, the aim is for these groups to implement, develop, track, and monitor actions within the community. Service Providers are represented in each layer, and implement actions recommended by workgroups. The core of the structure comprises a PEH Advisory Workgroup who actively participate, advise, and influence decision-making at every layer, and endeavor to implement initiatives within the unhoused community.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership for the Implementation Action Team will be supported through the outer layer including the two primary leads working collaboratively to advance the Implementation Plan. The **Inter-Governmental Task Force (ITF)** will provide specific leadership in the implementation of strategies related to the governmental functions within the community. Members of the ITF include city, county, and

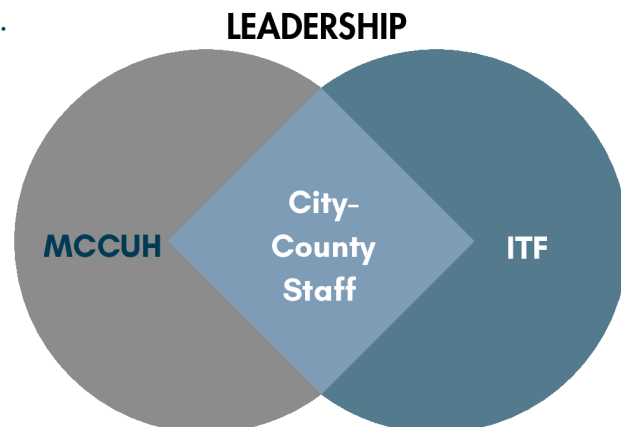
quasi-governmental agency staff who deliver essential services to the unhoused population. **The Mesa County Collaborative for the Unhoused (MCCUH)** is a network of key service providers and interdisciplinary teams dedicated to establishing a cohesive system of care for the unhoused population in the Mesa County area. Acting as a catalyst, the MCCUH unites partners and optimizes resources.



These two lead teams intersect with participation from key City and County staff members who are responsible for developing reports, maintaining documents, and providing updates to elected officials during County Commission or City Council workshops or meetings. The leadership teams work collaboratively to facilitate and lead specific subject matter workgroups tasked with defining next steps, timeline, baseline, and key performance indicators for implementation of each assigned action related to a specific strategy.

WORKGROUPS

The initially proposed workgroups identified below will be led by a representative(s) from the leadership team. They will work in key areas to support the actions related to their subject expertise or area of interest. Workgroup members can include representatives from the general public, business sectors, faith-based and non-profit organizations, philanthropic groups, and unhoused individuals.



ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION

This workgroup coordinates administrative processes across multiple service providers, aiding in implementation and enhancing consistency, efficiency, and effectiveness. They also facilitate communication and collaboration between organizations to ensure optimal system functioning.

DATA ANALYSIS

This workgroup examines data on unhoused individuals, gathering and analyzing it to identify trends and gaps in services, informing decision-making and resource allocation. They produce reports to guide policy development, program evaluation, and strategic planning efforts to achieve 7 strategic outcomes.

FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

This workgroup secures grants, explores funding options, and fosters partnerships to ensure sustainable financial support for homelessness initiatives. Their goal is to maximize resources and effectively manage funds to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness (PEH).

POLICY & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

This workgroup will research, track, advocate, and recommend policies at all government levels and helps foster community understanding through education. They will engage with officials and stakeholders to secure support and understanding for housing solutions and PEH.

OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS

This workgroup focuses on increasing street outreach and enhancing essential services in the community. They work to address gaps in services and identify creative solutions for meeting specific needs.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE & PUBLIC HEALTH

This workgroup supports unhoused system coordination of resources related to public safety, mental and behavioral health, substance use, healthcare, and policies supporting access to services for individuals experiencing homelessness. They also foster collaboration among service providers to ensure comprehensive care within the community.

ACCESS & MOBILITY

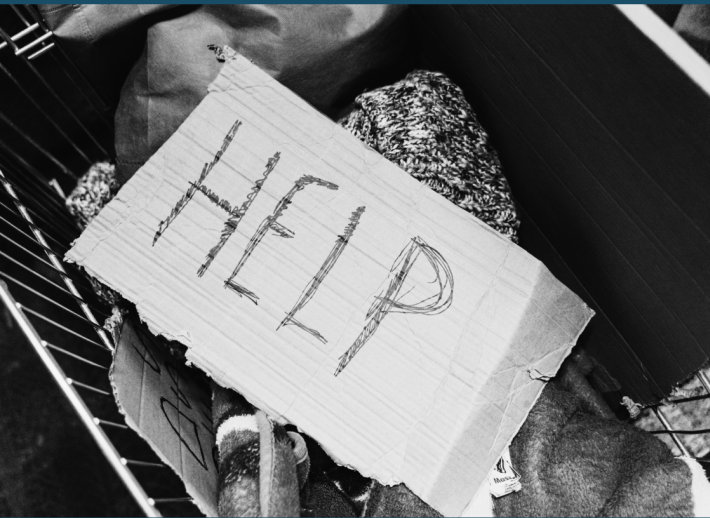
This workgroup aims to enhance transportation options for unhoused individuals, ensuring access to essential services and addressing mobility barriers within the community through collaboration and advocacy efforts.

PEH ADVISORY

This workgroup provides guidance and feedback on policies, programs, and services aimed at addressing homelessness, ensuring that the perspectives and needs of PEH are considered in the decision-making processes within the unhoused system.

HOUSING STABILITY

Aims to improve housing stability and increase housing choices for unhoused or at-risk of homelessness in the community.



UNHOUSED STRATEGIES

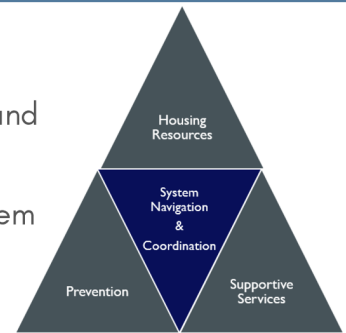
The Seven Unhoused Strategies were collaboratively developed with community-wide support and presented as recommendations to the Grand Junction City Council and the Mesa County Board of Commissioners. While each strategy includes recommended actions, these steps may evolve or expand during implementation. Moving forward, the workgroups will leverage their subject matter expertise to define the next steps, timeline, baseline, and key performance indicators for implementing each assigned action aligned with its corresponding strategy. The sequence of strategies does not indicate priorities, and implementation is anticipated to occur concurrently. Although there's a proposed timeline for initiating the implementation of each overarching strategy, workgroups will be responsible for assigning timelines to individual action items. Some strategies may enhance the efficiency and effectiveness elements for others.



STRATEGY 1

ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY-WIDE FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING THE COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM OF CARE PROCESSES

Improving systems supporting service provider referrals, access coordination, assessments, prioritization, and housing referrals is essential to better connect PEH and prevent them from falling through the cracks. Additional investment in the system is crucial to achieving community-driven goals. Strengthening key elements of the system ensures more efficient and effective use of funds and services, thereby alleviating provider capacity pressures.



OBJECTIVES

- 1 Reduce the number of people experiencing houselessness.
- 2 Reduce the length of time individuals remain unhoused.
- 3 Reduce the number of people who enter first-time houselessness.
- 4 Reduce the number of people who return to houselessness.
- 5 Increase the number of people entering permanent housing.
- 6 Increase successful placements of people of unsheltered PEH into both transitional and permanent housing.
- 7 Increase successful referrals to behavioral health treatment and supportive services.

ACTION TEAM LEAD

Mesa County Collaborative for the Unhoused

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



ACTIONS

- 1.1 Establish a Coordinated Entry System (CES) Leadership Team representing various key stakeholders to guide the ongoing decision-making process.
- 1.2 Establish clear and measurable performance metrics to track effectiveness of the CES. Metrics should include housing placement rates, time to housing, and improvements made.
- 1.3 Implement a systemic process for continuous improvement; regularly review data, seek feedback from stakeholders, and conduct after-action reviews to identify areas for enhancement using this information to adjust policies.
- 1.4 Strengthen data collection and analysis capabilities to inform decision-making by developing protocols for consistent data entry; integration of data systems; and frequent evaluation of trends, gaps, and areas for improvement

WORKGROUPS

- ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION
- DATA ANALYSIS
- ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION
- DATA ANALYSIS
- ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION
- DATA ANALYSIS
- ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION
- DATA ANALYSIS

- 1.5 Provide training and education for all stakeholders involved in the CES, including frontline staff, case managers, outreach workers, community partners, and community members more broadly for increased understanding

**ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION****POLICY & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT****FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**

- 1.6 Create a formalized PEH Advisory Group to identify needs, give feedback on metrics and system issues and inform practices of CES and ongoing efforts.

**ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION****PEH ADVISORY GROUP**



STRATEGY 2 ESTABLISH A FLEXIBLE CITY-COUNTY HOUSING FUND TO SUPPORT HOUSING SECURITY AND INCREASE COLLABORATION BETWEEN SERVICES

Working together to address homelessness, they combine resources and expertise to offer effective services and financial assistance. A flexible funding pool could secure stable housing for individuals and enhance collaborative service delivery, providing a versatile solution to address and alleviate the impacts of homelessness.

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Reduce the number of people experiencing houselessness.
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- 7 Increase successful referrals to behavioral health treatment and supportive services.

ACTION TEAM LEAD

Inter-Governmental Task Force

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



ACTIONS

- 2.1 Direct financial resources toward preventing houselessness and encourage efforts among providers.
- 2.2 Explore public-private partnerships with government agencies, non-profit organizations, philanthropic groups and private businesses to pool resources and create a more robust and sustainable flexible housing fund.
- 2.3 Develop innovative long-term assistance models that can allow individuals to pay back assistance based on their financial capacity. (i.e. revolving funds).

WORKGROUPS

-  **FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**
-  **FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**
-  **FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**



STRATEGY 3 INCREASE ACCESS TO PREVENTION, DIVERSION, AND HOUSING NAVIGATION

Assistance in accessing supportive housing programs is crucial, especially for those already experiencing homelessness, as barriers such as resources, time, and eligibility requirements can impede access. While various providers offer services like financial training and legal assistance, improving access, engagement, and coordination across these services is essential to maximize benefits for individuals at risk of homelessness.

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness.
- 2 Reduce the length of time individuals remain unhoused.
- 3 Reduce the number of people who enter first-time homelessness.
- 4 Reduce the number of people who return to homelessness.
- 5 Increase the number of people entering permanent housing.
- 6 Increase successful placements of people of unsheltered PEH into both transitional and permanent housing.
- 7 Increase successful referrals to behavioral health treatment and supportive services.

ACTION TEAM LEAD

Mesa County Collaborative for the Unhoused

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



ACTIONS

- 3.1 Provide comprehensive and aligned outreach (e.g. increase number of staff improving access of prevention and housing navigation services).
- 3.2 As part of the CES evaluation process and next steps, integrate diversion into the policies and procedures for CES administration in line with national best practices. Increase availability of housing problem solving and diversion services for all people engaged with CES.
- 3.3 Coordinate the development and implementation of the diversion strategy with other strategies, including the CES evaluation and flexible housing fund.
- 3.4 Coordinate and leverage existing prevention resources across city-county to connect households at imminent risk of homelessness with stabilization resources.

WORKGROUPS

-  **OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS**
-  **PEH ADVISORY GROUP**
-  **ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION**
-  **DATA ANALYSIS**
-  **HOUSING STABILITY**
-  **ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION**
-  **FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**
-  **ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION**
-  **DATA ANALYSIS**
-  **HOUSING STABILITY**

- 3.5 Develop a landlord engagement program to expand housing referrals and increase accessibility of existing affordable housing stock.

 **FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**
 **HOUSING STABILITY**

- 3.6 Expand programs to provide workforce, vocational training, education for PEH.

 **OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS**
 **PEH ADVISORY GROUP**

- 3.7 Expand outreach efforts through the City of Grand Junction's Neighbor-2-Neighbor Program, Resource Center and other Service Providers to include prevention and diversion services.

 **ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION**
 **OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS**

- 3.8 Utilize existing housing related screening processes implemented by healthcare or emergency service providers to identify individuals at-risk of losing housing.

 **ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION**
 **HOUSING STABILITY**
 **COMM RESILIENCE & PUBLIC HEALTH**

- 3.9 Integrate housing navigation with case management services.

 **ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION**
 **HOUSING STABILITY**



STRATEGY 4 EXPAND ACCESSIBILITY TO BASIC NEEDS AND HYGIENE

Enhance facilities providing essential services like bathrooms, drinking water, food, laundry, showers, and climate-controlled spaces for individuals experiencing homelessness (PEH). Ensuring 24/7 access to these facilities is vital for meeting their basic needs and enduring unsheltered conditions, with strategic placement accounting for community dynamics.

OBJECTIVES

- 7 Increase successful referrals to behavioral health treatment and supportive services.

ACTION TEAM LEAD

Inter-Governmental Task Force

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



In Process - 2 years

ACTIONS

- 4.1 Identify and expand locations throughout county for high-risk geographic areas, areas accessible by public transportation, and proximity to other agencies/services.
- 4.2 Identify potential sources of funding.
- 4.3 Improve coordination across providers, organizations, and community groups that are already providing some basic needs and hygiene.
- 4.4 Leverage existing service providers and faith communities that are actively offering these services.
- 4.5 Incorporate needs of PEH in ongoing efforts to redevelop city park and other public facilities.

WORKGROUPS

- OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP
- OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS
- FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
- OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP
- OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP
- OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP



STRATEGY 5

EXPAND MENTAL HEALTH CARE, HEALTHCARE AND
SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT SERVICE OPTIONS

While treatment providers exist in Grand Junction, accessibility for PEH remains challenging due to unstable housing, necessitating a comprehensive, coordinated approach to improve access and effectiveness of healthcare, mental health and substance use treatment, especially for chronically unhoused individuals. Leveraging existing program models like MAC can optimize resource utilization for better outcomes.

OBJECTIVES

- 7
- Increase successful referrals to behavioral health treatment and supportive services.

ACTION TEAM LEAD

Inter-Governmental Task Force

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



In Process - 2 years

ACTIONS

- 5.1
- Integrate mental health, SUD treatment and other recovery-oriented service with interim housing options, recognizing and prioritizing that stable housing is a foundation for addressing mental health and SUD concerns.
- 5.2
- Cross train behavioral health case manager to provide housing navigation, and housing providers to provide behavioral service referrals.
- 5.3
- Assist in PEH in enrollment for health insurance, Medicaid, SSI/SSDI and other public assistance benefits.
- 5.4
- Explore mobile clinics and outreach teams that can reach PEH in various settings such as shelters, streets, and community centers.
- 5.5
- Ensure treatment services are flexible and culturally competent, considering the diverse backgrounds of the unhoused population.
- 5.6
- Develop integrated data systems that allow for seamless information sharing among service providers, ensuring healthcare professionals have access to relevant information and can make informed decisions about individual care.

WORKGROUPS

-
- COMM RESILIENCE & PUBLIC HEALTH
-
- HOUSING STABILITY
-
- COMM RESILIENCE & PUBLIC HEALTH
-
- ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION
-
- OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS
-
- ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION
-
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP
-
- COMM RESILIENCE & PUBLIC HEALTH
-
- OUTREACH & BASIC NEEDS
-
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP
-
- COMM RESILIENCE & PUBLIC HEALTH
-
- ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION
-
- DATA ANALYSIS
-
- COMM RESILIENCE & PUBLIC HEALTH
-
- ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION



STRATEGY 6 INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY AND EXPAND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO PEH

Limited mobility and accessibility intensify difficulties for individuals experiencing homelessness (PEH) when accessing supportive services in the Grand Junction area, as they face limited alternative transportation options. Spread-out vital services across the county make it challenging for PEH to reach them, compounded by transfer requirements that hinder prompt access. High transportation costs, whether public or private, pose a significant barrier for PEH already burdened by financial constraints.

OBJECTIVES

- 7 Increase successful referrals to behavioral health treatment and supportive services.

ACTION TEAM LEAD

Inter-Governmental Task Force

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



In Process – 4 years

ACTIONS

- 6.1 Develop a reduced fare program for public transportation (i.e. discounted or free transit passes for PEH) or flexible payment options (i.e. contactless payments, mobile apps, and preloaded cards, to eliminate need for cash). Include examination of payment models from public and private insurance.
- 6.2 Extend operating hours of public transportation.
- 6.3 Increase pedestrian and bicycle accessibility of employment hubs and services frequented by PEH (e.g. area around Resource Center, connections between services).
- 6.4 Provide clear and easily accessible information regarding transportation options, routes, schedules, and service changes through multiple channels including mobile apps, website, and printed materials.
- 6.5 Increase shuttle services connecting shelters, service providers and key transportation hubs.
- 6.6 Develop a transportation voucher program in coordination with case management services to cover costs of private transportation services (e.g. rideshare, taxis, etc) and in instances where public transit is not appropriate (e.g. transport to medical appointments, destination outside of service areas, etc).

WORKGROUPS

- TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS & MOBILITY
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP
- TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS & MOBILITY
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP
- TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS & MOBILITY
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP
- TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS & MOBILITY
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP
- TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS & MOBILITY
- PEH ADVISORY GROUP



STRATEGY 7 INCREASE NON-MARKET HOUSING OPTIONS INCLUDING INTERIM HOUSING & SHELTER UNITS

Crucial components of the housing continuum for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness are lacking or inadequately equipped in the Grand Junction area. Expanding current housing options and establishing new shelter and interim housing solutions are essential to offer stability and vital support for those aiming to transition out of homelessness. Interim housing options may encompass emergency shelters, interim shelters, and interim housing facilities.

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Reduce the number of people experiencing houselessness.
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- 4 Reduce the number of people who return to houselessness.
- 5 Increase the number of people entering permanent housing.
- 6 Increase successful placements of people of unsheltered PEH into both transitional and permanent housing.
- 7 Increase successful referrals to behavioral health treatment and supportive services.

ACTION TEAM LEAD

Inter-Governmental Task Force

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



In Process – 4 years

ACTIONS

- 7.1 Expand and diversify non-market housing options including interim housing and shelter units, such as non-congregate temporary shelter, low-barrier harm reduction options and safe parking.
- 7.2 Conduct inventory of existing vacant buildings, unused parking areas, and city, county-owned properties that are currently underutilized in suitable geographic locations with consideration for proximity to services and higher risk areas.
- 7.3 Increase community education opportunities regarding the benefits of diverse shelter options, and NIMBYism.
- 7.4 Identify and/or develop potential sources of funding for both infrastructure and operational costs.

WORKGROUPS

-  **FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**
-  **HOUSING STABILITY**
-  **FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**
-  **HOUSING STABILITY**
-  **POLICY & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**
-  **HOUSING STABILITY**
-  **FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**
-  **HOUSING STABILITY**

7.5	Consider the acquisition of properties for redevelopment for the purpose of single occupancy housing (e.g. hotel, motel acquisition, etc.).		FUNDING & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
			HOUSING STABILITY

MESA COUNTY COLLABORATIVE FOR THE UNHOUSED (MCCUH)

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Grand Junction Area Unhoused Needs Assessment



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Data collection protocols for this project were reviewed and approved by WCG IRB, a private Institutional Review Board, under project number 20232932.

This report represented the completion of a two-phase project. In collaboration with OMNI institute, the second phase of the project builds upon the findings from the Unhoused Needs Assessment to identify and prioritize strategy recommendations for the City of Grand Junction and partners to address the needs identified.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2023, the City of Grand Junction and partners launched an Unhoused Needs Assessment to understand the current and projected needs of people experiencing houselessness (PEH) and the housing and supportive service agencies that support PEH in Grand Junction and the surrounding communities within Mesa County. The City of Grand Junction contracted with JG Research and Evaluation to complete the assessment and identify key housing and service gaps, barriers, and capacity to meet existing and future needs. The assessment will be used to inform community strategies to ensure that the experience of houselessness in the Grand Junction area is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The assessment team utilized multiple methods of data collection and analysis to generate a comprehensive understanding of the needs of PEH and the agencies that serve them. Data collected included interviews with agency staff and individuals with lived experience of houselessness, a community survey, administrative service provider data, and secondary population data.

Key findings from the Unhoused Needs Assessment include:

Unhoused and at-risk population in Mesa County

- The population of individuals estimated to be unhoused in Grand Junction is 2300.
- Available data suggests that the majority of PEH in the area are unsheltered and chronically unhoused.
- Between 2016 and 2021, the median rent-to-income ratio for Mesa County residents increased by 24% and is approaching the cost-burdened threshold of 30%.
- Areas within Mesa County whose residents face the highest risk of houselessness include central Grand Junction, Fruita, and Southeast Grand Junction/Riverside.

Housing and supportive services

- There is a high need for transitional and permanent supportive housing.
- PEH and service providers expressed interest in designated areas for legal camping and safe parking.
- There is a significant shortage of subsidized affordable housing, especially in Clifton.
- Participants identified behavioral health services (e.g. mental health and substance use) as the highest priority need under supportive services.
- Challenges meeting their basic needs (e.g. food, water) and accessing transportation were commonly noted by PEH.
- Reducing the number of hospitalizations among PEH through prevention and diversion services could result in significant long-term cost savings.

Barriers in unhoused care system function

- Service providers face barriers related to funding, staff capacity, and community support.
- Consistency of data collection and coordination across services is currently limited, resulting in inefficiencies in service delivery and resource utilization.
- PEH experience barriers accessing housing and supportive services as a result of the cost of housing, service requirements and restrictions, and stigma.

Engagement with law enforcement and first responders

- The City of Grand Junction and Mesa County have recently developed programs to better support PEH interacting with law enforcement and emergency services, but programs are limited by the resources that are available in the area.

Recommendations for strengthening care continuum

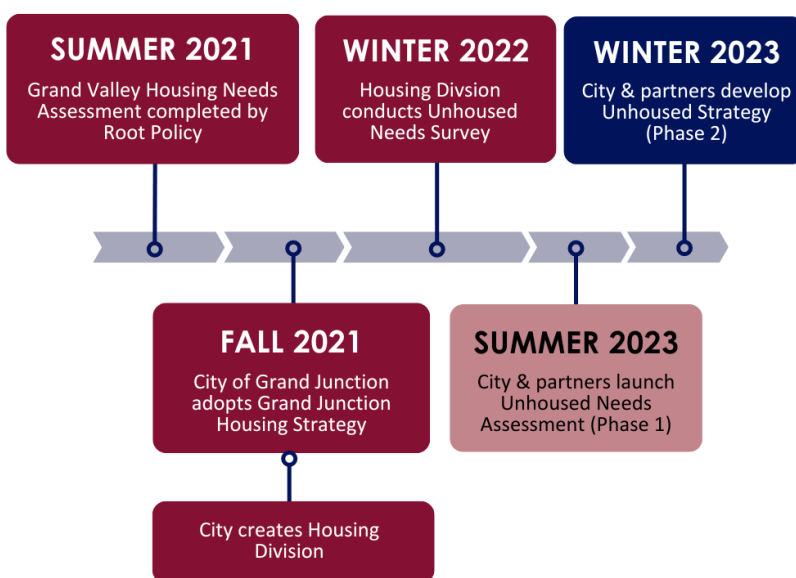
- Service providers would like to see local government expand its role in providing a big picture community vision to respond to houselessness and supporting a collaborative approach, while leaving the role of service provision to existing agencies.
- The community should evaluate and make necessary improvements to each component of their coordinated entry system (process for connecting PEH with needed services) in order to improve data collection, referral processes, and service delivery.
- The perspectives of individuals with lived experience of houselessness should be at the center of decision-making with regard to improving the system of care for PEH.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2010, the City of Grand Junction and surrounding communities within Mesa County (“Grand Junction area”) have experienced significant population growth accompanied by notable economic and demographic shifts. In the context of these socioeconomic changes, rises in the cost of housing and a significant shortage of affordable housing units for low-income households are contributing to a growing risk of houselessness within the area. In response to the area’s growth in overall population and concern for the number of residents experiencing houselessness, the City of Grand Junction and partners have engaged in several efforts (noted in Figure 1 below) in recent years to both understand the unique housing needs of the community and develop strategies to strengthen the community’s ability to meet the needs identified.

This assessment is a complement to previous efforts and is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of housing and supportive service needs specific to residents experiencing houselessness or at risk of losing housing. The primary goal of the assessment is to inform and tailor policy and programmatic strategies to support the community in reaching functional zero¹ houselessness, ensuring that the experience of houselessness is rare and brief and the number of individuals entering houselessness is fewer than the number exiting houselessness.

Figure 1. Timeline of City of Grand Junction housing and unhoused activities



In late 2020, the City of Grand Junction and its partners commissioned the Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment. The Housing Needs Assessment was completed in June 2021.

Key findings from the Grand Valley Housing Needs Assessment included:

1. A rate of population growth of 1,500 residents annually since 2015
2. A growing poverty rate across the area since 2010
3. A decreasing rate of home ownership
4. A housing shortage of over 3,000 housing units for low-income residents across the area

Additionally, of the 1,853 Grand Junction area residents who responded to the survey for the assessment, 45% reported facing one or more housing challenges, such as fear of eviction or struggle to pay rent/mortgage.

¹ (Community Solutions, 2023)

In light of the city and its partner's recent efforts to understand and respond to housing-related challenges in the Grand Junction area, this Unhoused Needs Assessment was undertaken to further these efforts by developing an in-depth understanding of the gaps and barriers present in existing supportive services and housing specific to people experiencing houselessness (PEH) and unstably housed residents.

Data collection methods

(Study methodology is detailed in Appendix 1.)

- Descriptive statistics to generate counts of service utilization and profiles of unhoused populations. Sources: Service providers and community-based organizations
- Population profiles of Mesa County and Grand Junction. Sources: Publicly available secondary data
- Qualitative interviews to understand perspectives of key informants (city, county, and partner agency staff) and lived experts (individuals with lived experience of houselessness)
- Survey of community member attitudes and perspectives on needs

A note on terminology: In an effort to shift public perception of houselessness, the City of Grand Junction and partners prioritize the use of terms “houseless” or “unhoused” and person-first language such as “people experiencing houselessness” instead of the often stigmatized terms “homeless” and “homeless people.” In general, this report uses the terms “unhoused,” “houseless,” and “people experiencing houselessness” throughout and strives to preserve the value of the person-first perspective, but there are some exceptions made in reference to prior reports, federal policies, and direct quotes from participants. For additional terms and definitions, a full glossary of terms is included at the end of the report.

The assessment was intended to meet three primary goals, as outlined by the City of Grand Junction and partners:

- 1. Understand the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and diverse needs of PEH and unstably housed residents in the community in the context of projected population growth and economic shifts.**
- 2. Identify key barriers and gaps within Grand Junction area's service array and housing stock to meet the needs of PEH and unstably housed residents.**
- 3. Develop a report detailing key findings of the assessment to be used in the development and prioritization of strategies for the City of Grand Junction and its partners to respond to the barriers, gaps, and needs identified.**

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF UNHOUSED POPULATION IN MESA COUNTY

In order to identify the current and future needs of both PEH and individuals at risk of losing housing in Mesa County, it is necessary to understand the current scope of houselessness and the key risk factors that contribute to residents entering houselessness. This section provides an overview of Mesa County's unhoused population based on available administrative and other service provider data and model-based estimates.

Types of houselessness

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) official estimates of houselessness include people staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or places not meant for human habitation, such as a park, car, or abandoned building. This is called literal houselessness and is tracked through one night point-in-time counts (PIT).² HUD has four categories under which an individual or family may qualify as unhoused: literally homeless, imminent risk of homelessness, homelessness under other federal statutes, and fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence.³ HUD maintains a narrower definition (Category 1) to prioritize limited resources and to measure houselessness in a discrete way that makes "ending" houselessness an attainable goal.

Reasons for entering houselessness

Similar to the findings of the 2022-2023 Unhoused Needs Survey⁴ conducted by the City of Grand Junction's Housing Division, the factors leading to individuals becoming unhoused among the assessment's lived expert participant group were diverse and often multi-faceted, meaning most participants noted two or more compounding reasons for losing their housing. Most often, participants described entering houselessness due to economic, social, and/or health reasons. Common reasons for entering houselessness among lived experts are presented in Table 1.

HUD Categories of Homelessness

Category 1: Literally homeless – An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning the individual or family has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation or is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living arrangements.

Category 2: Imminent risk of homelessness – An individual or family who will imminently lose (within 14 days) their primary nighttime residence, provided no subsequent residence has been identified and the individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

Category 3: Homeless under other federal statutes – Unaccompanied youth (under 25) or families with children and youth who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition and are defined as homeless under another federal statute, have not had permanent housing during the past 60 days, have experienced persistent instability, and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period.

Category 4: Fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence – Any individual or family fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

² (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2014)

³ (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2023)

⁴ (Yu et al., 2022)

Table 1. Participant reasons for entering houselessness

Economic	Social	Health	
Increased housing cost	Divorce/partner break-up	Substance use disorder of participant or family member	<p>From the City of Grand Junction Housing Division's 2022-2023 Unhoused Needs Survey:</p> <p>50% of participants indicated 2 or more reasons for losing housing</p> <p>16% indicated 4 or more reasons for losing housing</p>
Housing cost too high	Criminal record		
Increased cost of living (non-housing)	Violence or abuse in the household	Medical or physical disability of participant or family member	
Lost or reduced income	Eviction/conflict with property owner	Someone else became sick, disabled, or died	
Stolen from or was victim of a scam	Discrimination (Race or other identity)		
	Conflict with/thrown out by family member		

“ I went through a divorce and my husband was the main person that worked. And with me not being able to work, I didn't have the resources to be able to pay the rent and I didn't get any help. And so that's kind of what has led us here. – Lived expert

“ Mainly just not meeting eye to eye with my parents and stuff like that. A lot of my family struggles with mental issues and communication skills, so I just left and was all on my own. I lived with my older sister for a while...I was recently diagnosed with MS last year...It did become disabling to work after a while, so I recently quit working at the beginning of the year because I was losing my eyesight and stuff. – Lived expert

Unhoused population estimates

For this needs assessment, we rely upon both standardized data collection efforts within Mesa County, as well as model-based estimates that use multiple data sources to produce estimates of the unhoused population. In doing so, we can produce a clearer picture of the overall unhoused population living in the city and county.

Point-in-Time count

The PIT count is a method used to estimate the number of people experiencing houselessness on a single night, typically conducted in late January, in communities across the United States. The PIT count provides a snapshot of houselessness and helps inform policies and programs aimed at addressing the issue.

Historical PIT counts for Grand Junction and the regional Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC), made up of local CoCs in non-metro counties across Colorado, are shown in Table 2. Overall, in the non-metro areas of Colorado in 2022, there were 3,156 sheltered and 7,214 unsheltered individuals, for a total of 10,370 unhoused individuals in the region. Within Mesa County specifically, the 2023 PIT identified 606 unique individuals, with more than half of those being unsheltered at the time of the count.

Table 2. Point-in-Time count: 2019-2023

Year	PIT count Mesa County	Sheltered PIT count	Unsheltered PIT count	Regional PIT count (Balance of State CoC)
2019	361	269 (75%)	92 (25%)	2,302
2021	515	204 (40%)	311 (60%)	1,221
2023	606	248 (41%)	358 (59%)	2,210

Notes: The PIT count methodology alternates every year between counting only sheltered individuals and counting both sheltered and unsheltered individuals. Only years with both unsheltered and sheltered counts are depicted. The Balance of State CoC covers Colorado's 54 non-metro and rural counties. This includes all counties outside of metro Denver, Colorado Springs, and Northern Colorado. Since 2020, Northern Colorado has been designated by HUD as a separate CoC. Source: Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

In looking at the patterns across 2019, 2021, and 2023, we can see that there has been a consistent increase in the population of individuals who are unhoused in Mesa County over the past four years. Of note, the population of individuals who are unhoused and counted in the PIT increased more than three-fold between 2019 and 2021. The proportions of those who are unhoused and unsheltered in 2023 in Mesa County is consistent with states that have the highest rates of unsheltered status (Most - CA – 67.3%, MS – 63.6%, HI – 62.7%, OR – 61.7%, AZ – 59.2%)⁵.

By-Name List

The By-Name List (BNL) facilitates a person-centered approach to addressing houselessness, allowing service providers to tailor interventions to an individual's unique circumstances. The BNL is a real-time, dynamic database that contains detailed information about individuals experiencing houselessness in a specific community or region. The primary purpose of the BNL is to support efforts to address houselessness by providing accurate, up-to-date information about the unhoused population and their specific needs. In Grand Junction, the BNL was launched at the end of 2018 and further implemented in 2019 and is managed by Grand Valley Catholic Outreach.

At the time of this study in the Fall of 2023, there are currently 256 unique individuals included on the Grand Junction area BNL. With archived data, which includes all records from when the local BNL began in 2018, there are data on a total of 1,108 unique individuals who have been involved with service providers who participate in the BNL. Figure 2 and Table 3 provide a summary of distinct individuals added to the BNL per year since 2018.

Figure 2. Individuals added to the BNL by year

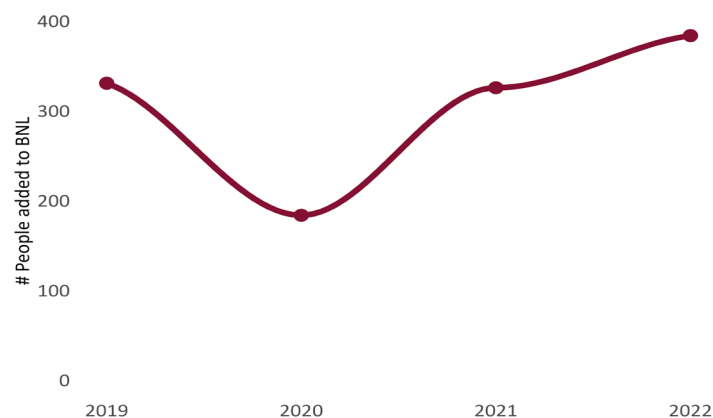


Table 3. Unique individuals on BNL: 2018-2023

Year added	Count
2018	10
2019	330
2020	183
2021	314
2022	321

⁵ (de Sousa et al, 2022)

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) ensures that students experiencing homelessness have access to education and related services, which includes identifying unhoused students and supporting them within the education system. McKinney-Vento aims to remove barriers to education for unhoused children and youth, providing them with stability and support to succeed academically.

McKinney-Vento defines homelessness more broadly than HUD by including individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes those staying in shelters, motels, cars, parks, or doubled-up with others due to economic hardship. Totals of unhoused school children, as defined by McKinney-Vento, are presented in Table 4. Mesa County, in contrast to the state of Colorado, has experienced a steady increase in the frequency of unhoused students since 2018.

Model-based estimates of prevalence

Based on the 2023 PIT count and additional data sources (BNL), we estimate the unhoused population (excluding those who are doubled-up) for Mesa County in the past 12 months is **1,360** unique individuals. In addition to this estimate of the unhoused population, we also identified a method for estimating the doubled-up population overall, as McKinney-Vento doubled-up totals only include families with school-aged children. The doubled-up estimate for Mesa County is **940** unique individuals. A detailed description of both estimate methods can be found in Appendix 1.

Each of the model-based estimates produce a population estimate that is independent of the other, and we can therefore combine the unhoused and doubled-up estimates, to create a more comprehensive and complete picture of individuals who are unhoused in Mesa County during the past 12-months, yielding a total of **2,300** individuals.

Characteristics of unhoused population

Client characteristics among those served by service providers

In order to understand characteristics of the unhoused population in the Grand Junction area, it is important to triangulate across multiple data sources to address the limitations of any specific data source that tracks demographics of PEH in Grand Junction. Many agencies do not track demographics at all, and among those that do, data is tracked inconsistently within and across organizations. For example, the BNL currently lacks any demographic data for race, ethnicity, or gender. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) demographic data is limited because not all organizations who work with PEH utilize this database. However, looking across data sources can address some of these data gaps and can help identify specific data systems and service providers that are more or less engaged with specific populations.

Table 4. Unhoused school children: 2018-2022

Location	School year	Number of unhoused students
Mesa County	2018-2019	677
	2019-2020	694
	2020-2021	634
	2021-2022	797
	2022-2023	907
Colorado	2018-2019	21,560
	2019-2020	21,416
	2020-2021	15,374
	2021-2022	17,957
	2022-2023	*

*Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE),
Note: Statewide data for 2022-2023 were not available from the CDE at the time of this report.*

Table 5 shows a summary of client characteristics in the HMIS and BNL systems, and includes household type, veteran status, and disability status. Overall, service providers that enter data into the HMIS system seem to focus more on adult PEH clients, as compared to the BNL. The BNL list has proportionally more clients who are veterans, and slightly more who have a disability, when compared to the HMIS system.

Figure 3 shows client American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) and Black/African American individuals are overrepresented relative to the Grand Junction population, which is 1% for both demographics. People who are AI/AN represent 6% of HMIS and 4% of service provider encounters. Similarly, people who are Black/African American make up 5% of HMIS and 4% of service provider encounters.

There is some variation in the gender breakdown of clients served by direct service provider administrative data and HMIS data. Service providers report serving 48% male and 51% female, whereas males represent 61% of HMIS data. The Grand Junction population is 50.3% female. Discrepancies in service provider administrative data and HMIS data are largely due to who is participating in HMIS. However, it is important to note that HMIS data reporting is only required for organizations/agencies that are recipients and subrecipients of the Continuum of Care Program and Emergency Solutions Grant funds.

Grand Junction area BNL

In addition to aggregate numbers on client characteristics and household composition of those who were unhoused, some data sources can provide more detailed information on trends over time. The BNL includes data for individuals during and after their inclusion on the list, which is helpful in understanding how specific needs vary over time and how specific types of individuals are served. Figures 4 and 5, for example, summarize changes in the breakdown of different types of household composition over the period of 2019 to 2022, as well as the unhoused status of individuals on the BNL in the same time period.

Table 5. Snapshot of client characteristics in HMIS and BNL

Characteristic	HMIS snapshot (1/2019 - 8/2023)		BNL snapshot (2019-2022)	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Unique individuals	4760	-	1200	
Households	4053	-		
Household type				
Adult only	3130	77%	672	55%
Youth only	538	13%	298	24%
Family	341	8%	254	20%
Veteran (yes)	423	9%	304	25%
Disability (yes)	2062	43%	607	51%
Chronically unhoused (yes)			759	63%

Source: Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), By Name List (BNL)

Figure 3. Race/ethnicity characteristics among clients in HMIS and service provider data, compared to Grand Junction population



Figure 4. Household composition among unhoused population on BNL: 2019-2022

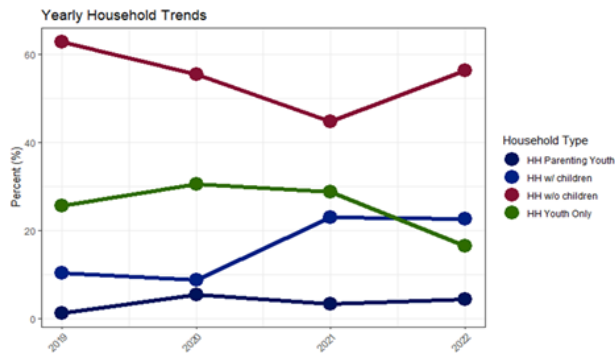
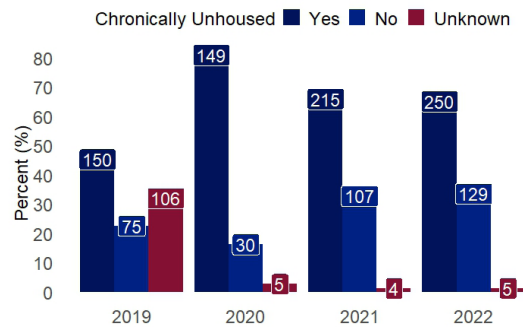
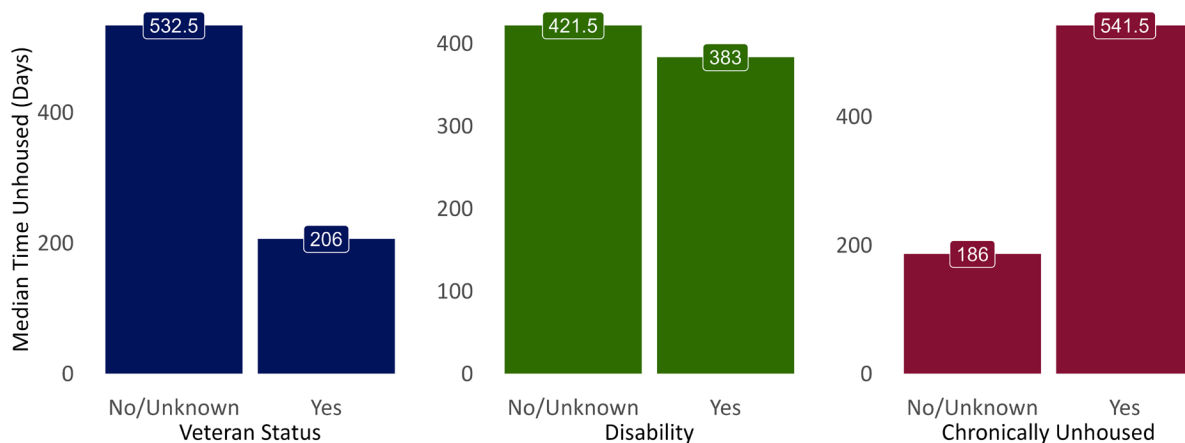


Figure 5. Unhoused status in BNL



The BNL can also provide insight into the length of time that individuals who are on the BNL have been unhoused. For 470 of 1,200 individuals (39.17%) on the BNL at any point in the past five years, we can summarize the length of time that an individual has been unhoused by taking the date when someone becomes housed and subtracting this date from the start date of being listed on the BNL as unhoused. There are some patterns across key demographics, as demonstrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Length of time being unhoused by status: 2018-2023



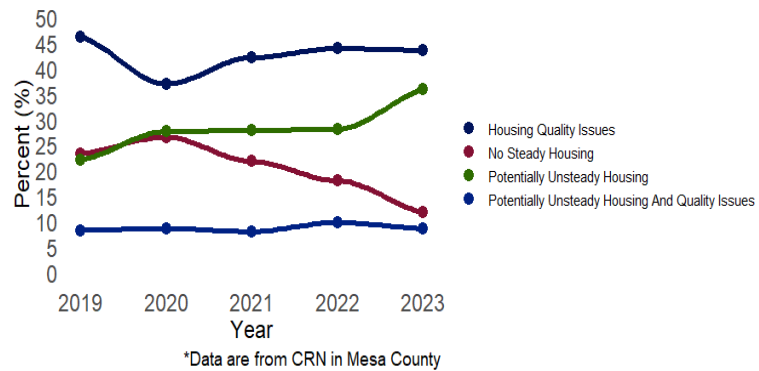
A few patterns and important elements emerge from the Grand Junction area BNL demographic tables:

- **The majority of individuals on the BNL are verified as or presumed to be chronically unhoused.** This is consistent with the intention of the BNL, which is to support coordinated engagement across the housing continuum with those who are chronically houseless. (67.5% in 2021, 66% in 2022).
- **After a steady decline, households with children increased from 2021 to 2022, and there has been a decline in households that are youth only since 2019.**
- **Just over 50% of individuals who are unhoused and on the BNL self-report a disability.**
- **Time spent being unhoused varies considerably across veterans, those with a disability, and individuals who are classified as chronically unhoused.**

Community Resource Network

The Community Resource Network (CRN) data provide additional insight into the characteristics of individuals who are unhoused in the Grand Junction area and engage with the service array. Within CRN, for individuals who need assistance with housing, participating organizations track the type of assistance that is needed across four categories: Housing quality, No Steady housing, Potentially unsteady housing, and Potentially unsteady housing and quality issues. Figure 7 demonstrates how there has been an increase in those who have potentially unsteady housing and a decrease in those with no steady housing who have engaged with CRN providers. This finding is consistent with data presented on economic drivers of individuals at risk of becoming unhoused.

Figure 7. Housing hierarchy of needs: 2019-2023



McKinney-Vento characteristics

The patterns of the race/ethnicity of houseless schoolchildren have shifted in the county since 2019. Figure 8 demonstrates how there was a relatively large proportion of individuals who identified as Hispanic/Latino in 2019 who were houseless schoolchildren, but this has dramatically decreased with a concomitant increase in houselessness among youth who identify as White. The prevalence of American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders has remained stable over time.

Figure 8. Types of houseless schoolchildren by race/ethnicity: 2019-2022

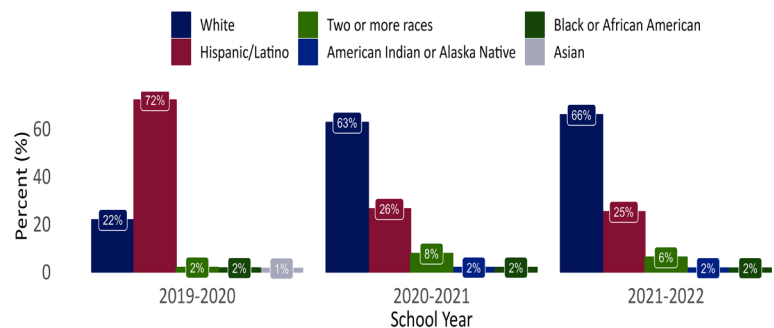


Figure 9. Types of houseless schoolchildren by housing status: 2018-2022

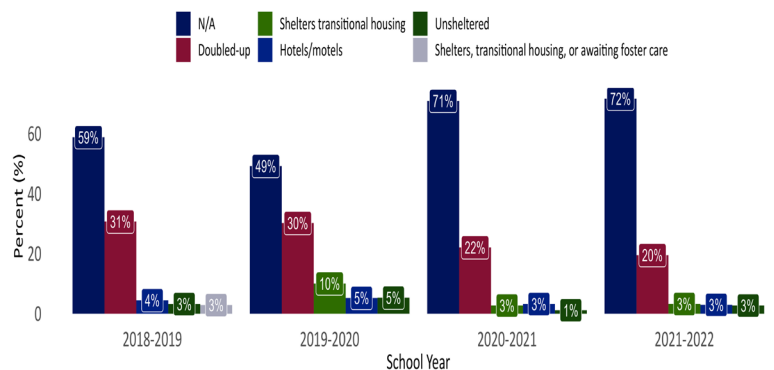


Figure 9 also provides insight from McKinney-Vento about the nature of the type of houselessness experienced by youth in Mesa County schools. Since the 2019-2020 school year, there has been an increase in the proportion of unhoused youth whose living situation is unknown, coinciding with a decrease across all other categories. This pattern is most likely a result of limited details in data collection processes, which could be strengthened to further clarify patterns of the experience of being unhoused among youth in the county.

Participant perspectives on unhoused population changes

In addition to the demographic composition of the unhoused population compiled from service provider data, interview participants for this assessment offered reflections on changes they have noticed among the population of PEH in Grand Junction and Mesa County.

A few key informants who have been serving PEH for several years observed that, in general, the number and complexity of challenges PEH typically face has grown, making it increasingly difficult to support individuals in reaching stability and exiting houselessness.

And the population here has changed. They're younger now. The drugs have greatly influenced them. Meth, heroin, fentanyl, all of it, it's just rampant. So that most, between 75%, 85%, 90% of the homeless population here are Mesa County residents. We get some transients because we have good weather, because the drugs are available. But the majority are residents and they're younger. They're angrier. They're sicker. The problems are more convoluted, they're harder to solve, more faceted. —Key informant

City department leaders shared that their staff who regularly engage with PEH, such as parks and recreation or law enforcement, often express that their interactions with PEH have become more contentious and challenging in recent years. Where city staff once often had rapport with many of the PEH they interacted with, it is now more common for individuals to be unwilling to engage with city staff or even act aggressively toward them.

At the same time the training available to city department staff who regularly interface with PEH is limited and none of the city departments who regularly engage with PEH have a formal policy or procedure for interactions with PEH.

In general, these observations from key informants suggest a need for both expanded behavioral health services and more robust policies, procedures, and training among city staff specific to engagement with PEH and individuals in crisis.

From the perspectives of lived experts, many have observed an overall increase in the unhoused population and described a worsening houselessness situation that needs to be addressed with urgency. One elderly man living outside likened it to turning on a faucet: *"And unless they do something about it, it's going to get worse and worse and worse. And it's like, did somebody open a faucet? And unless somebody shuts that faucet off, it can hurt on everybody."* Another lived expert suggested that houselessness has *"just amplified by probably tenfold"* in recent years.

As the unhoused population has grown, several lived experts also shared that there are fewer places for them to go and a sense that the broader community and local government have become less tolerant of PEH in public spaces and using public facilities.

The sad thing is there's nowhere to really camp anymore. They've shut a lot of it down. They've kicked people off the trestle, they've kicked them off the other side. So where are all these people supposed to go? And a lot of them cannot get into the homeless shelter because of their animal or because of their record. It's stupid little things that set people back and you wonder why they don't give a f--- and they want to end up in the woods. You know what I mean? And it's a shame that you get arrested for doing it sometimes. But where's everybody supposed to go? That is the big question here. It's not enough housing. — Lived expert

From both the perspectives of key informants and lived experts, houselessness is a growing issue in the Grand Junction area and has led to increasing tensions between PEH and local government agencies. In the context of expanding risk factors associated with entering houselessness, detailed in the following section, it seems clear that the level of need among PEH and the resultant demand on agency personnel and resources can be expected to rise.

Section summary

There are several insights that can be gained from current data collection efforts within the community. By using the PIT, BNL, McKinney-Vento data and model-based estimates, there is a clear understanding of the extent and type of houselessness that individuals in Grand Junction and Mesa County are experiencing. In addition to these broad characteristics, the BNL, CRN, McKinney Vento, and service provider data provides insight on the populations of individuals who are engaging with the unhoused service sector.

Key takeaways:

- The population of individuals estimated to be unhoused in Grand Junction is 2,300. This includes individuals who are unhoused, placed in a shelter, and/or doubled-up with a friend or family member.
- Of individuals in the BNL, 67% are chronically unhoused.
- The proportion of the unhoused population who are unsheltered in Grand Junction is a comparatively high proportion (60% in most recent PIT).
- Individuals who identify as white are the most unhoused race or ethnicity in the county, followed by multiple races and AI/AN.
- AI/AN and Black/African American individuals are slightly overrepresented in both HMIS and service provider administrative data relative to the Grand Junction population.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND TRENDS IN MESA COUNTY RELATED TO THE UNHOUSED POPULATION

As noted above, individuals become unhoused for a variety of reasons, often including the straightforward inability to cover the cost of housing. In this section, we present data to demonstrate how economic trends within Mesa County may be impacting patterns of individuals and families becoming unhoused over the past five years and future risk of houselessness.

Population and household income

Figure 10 demonstrates the population growth that has occurred within the county since 2010 and the forecasted continued growth over the next 30 years. Between 2020 and 2050, Mesa County is projected to grow by 40%, from about 155,000 residents to 221,000 residents.

Of the total population in the county, Table 6 demonstrates the proportion of the population within the county that had a household income below the federal poverty threshold between 2016 and 2021, as poverty rates are an important indicator of houselessness. The poverty rates in Mesa County are consistently higher than the state average in Colorado. While poverty rates within Mesa County dropped nearly 5% from 2016 to 2021, according to American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates for Mesa County, this trend is most likely explained by an influx of pandemic relief funds that have since expired. Poverty rates increased slightly in 2022 and are predicted to rise across the U.S. in 2023.⁶ For the municipalities where data are available, the poverty rates in Palisade and Grand Junction are highest, while Fruita has the lowest poverty rate. Between 2016 and 2021, all municipalities have experienced declines in poverty, with Fruita seeing a nearly 10% drop.

Poverty rates are one risk factor for individuals becoming unhoused, as it is a general measure of income. An additional factor is the cost of housing within a region, as wages among those who are employed as related to housing costs have been shown to be the most relevant economic driver of houselessness within communities. The rent-to-income ratio is an important factor in assessing housing affordability, as

Figure 10. Mesa County Population: 2010-2050

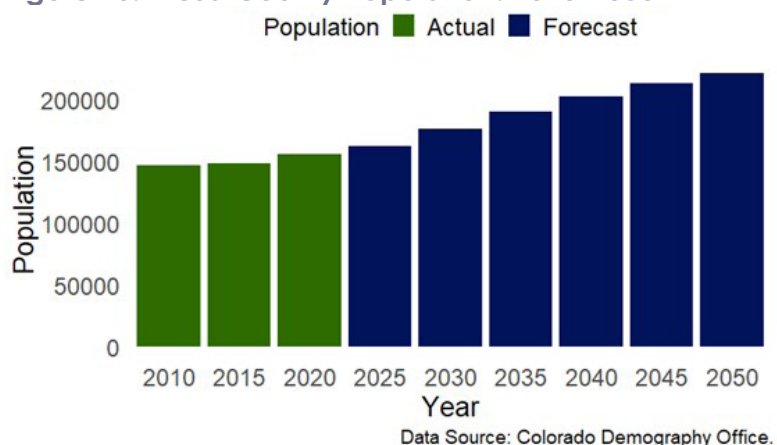


Table 6. Poverty rates in Colorado, Mesa County, and local municipalities: 2016-2021

Geography	Poverty rate	
	2016	2021
Colorado	12.2%	9.6%
Mesa County	16.3%	11.9%
Fruita City	17.7%	7.8%
Grand Junction city	18.9%	13.1%
Palisade Town	15.6%	14.7%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates.

⁶ (Danilo, 2023)

landlords typically look for tenants whose rent is at or below approximately 30% of their gross monthly income, and numerous studies have shown that when controlling for multiple factors, we can expect the rate of unhoused people in the population to increase once the rent-to-income ratio for a region exceeds 30%.

Table 7 displays the average rent-to-income ratio in the county between 2016 and 2021, using median income and average rent costs for Mesa County.

Between 2016 and 2021, the rent-to-income ratio has increased from approximately 22% to 28%, moving closer to the 30% threshold. While the poverty rate has declined, the cost of living has increased, thereby putting a larger proportion of the population in a housing situation that would be described as economically at risk.

Table 7. Change in median rent-to-income ratio, Mesa County: 2016-2021

	Median household income and rent-to-income ratio					
	2016			2021		
	Median income	Average rent	Rent-to-income ratio	Median income	Average rent	Rent-to-income ratio
Mesa County	\$50,070	\$932	22.34%	\$62,127	\$1,453	28.07%
<i>Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates and Bureau of Labor Statistics</i>						

Using data from multiple sources, we can further examine patterns in rent-to-income ratio across occupation categories. Table 8 displays the average annual rent-to-income ratios for the top five most cost-burdened occupations and for all occupations for 2016 and 2021 in the Grand Junction area. In 2016, only seven occupations had a rent-to-income ratio higher than 30%, and the average rent-to-income ratio across all occupations was 25.35%. In 2021, thirteen occupations had an average rent-to-income ratio greater than 30%, and the average rent-to-income ratio across all occupations had risen to 31.31%, a 24% increase.

Table 8. Rent-to-income ratio for top five most cost-burdened occupations in Grand Junction: 2016-2021

Occupation	2016		2021	
	% of total employment	% rent-to-income ratio	% of total employment	% rent-to-income ratio
Food preparation and serving related occupations	10.77	50.31	10.52	50.91
Healthcare support occupations	3.44	37.44	4.63	47.69
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	2.83	38.61	3.12	47.12
Personal care and service occupations	2.83	46.21	1.74	45.73
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.07	34.90	0.14	45.43
All occupations	100.00	25.35	100.00	31.31
<i>Source: Zillow and Bureau of Labor Statistics</i>				

The final manner of examining the relationship between rental cost and income is to analyze the percentage of employees, as measured by total employment in occupations, whose rent-to-income ratio was greater than 30% between 2016 and 2021. In 2016, 47% of those employed had a rent-to-income ratio greater than 30%. By 2021, the percentage of those employed who had a rent-to-income ratio greater than 30% had jumped to 78.3%.

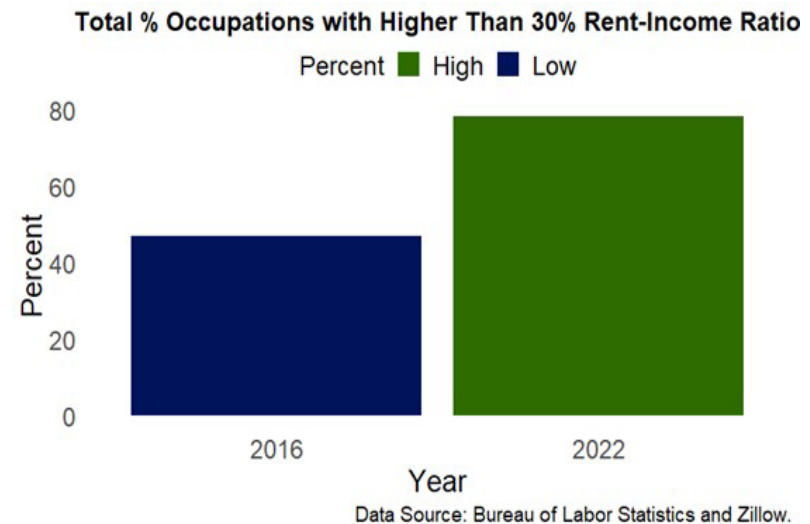
This means that on average, 78.3% of the employed population are cost-burdened based on average rent and average occupational wages in the Grand Junction area. In addition, those working in food preparation and serving occupations would be classified as severely cost-burdened, with a rent-to-income ratio at or above 50%.

Figure 11 contrasts the proportion of occupations with an average rent-to-income ratio above 30% between 2016 and 2022 for Mesa County.

Across these three measures comparing rental cost and income, a clear story emerges showing the increased risk of houselessness among individuals who are employed. This risk is highest for individuals employed in a few key sectors: food preparation and serving related occupations; health-care support occupations; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; personal care and service occupations; farming/fishing/forestry; transportation and material moving occupations; and production occupations. Each of these sectors

has a greater than 40% rent-to-income ratio and accounts for a total of 31.6% of jobs in Mesa County. These patterns suggest that wages have not increased at a rate similar to the increase in housing costs.

Figure 11. Employed by sector with higher than 30% rent-income ratio: 2016 v. 2022



Mapping risk factors associated with individuals becoming unhoused

In addition to the economic indicators related to income and the rent-to-income ratio, a set of risk factors was used to assess populations at risk of becoming unhoused within Grand Junction and surrounding communities.

Research suggests that these selected factors and trends are strongly associated with communities experiencing houselessness. These factors and trends are highly complex and often interact with one another. For example, behavioral health challenges (e.g., substance use disorder or mental illness) or family breakdown are made worse and complicated by structural factors, such as lack of available low-cost housing, unfavorable economic conditions, and a lack of mental health services.⁷ While comprehensive data about the extent of mental health and substance use challenges among Mesa County residents are not available

⁷ (Mago et al., 2013)

The variables included in the risk mapping are:

1. Unemployment rate
2. Percent of the population that is non-White
3. Poverty rate
4. Number of housing units per capita
5. Median rent
6. Rent as percentage of gross income
7. Percentage of households with public assistance income (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, SNAP)
8. Percentage of the population with a disability

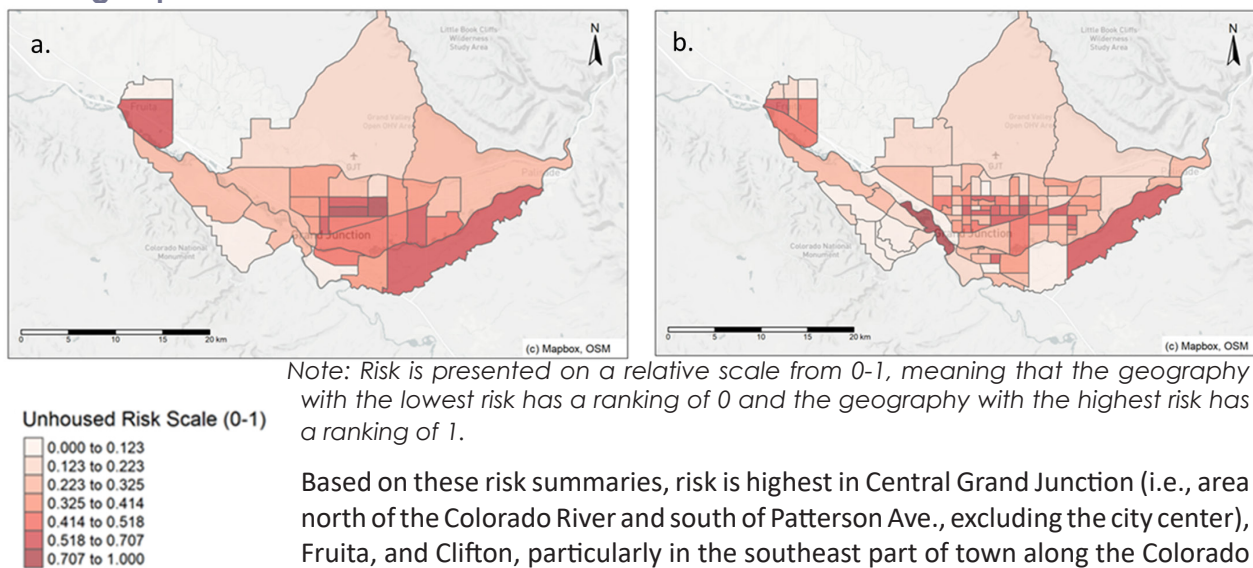
at the city- or county-wide level, there are substantial economic data that may capture some of the structural trends that can lead to houselessness, which are described here as risk of houselessness.

Using the selected indicators and trends, which include poverty indicators and demographics, wage and employment data, and housing market trends, maps were generated to demonstrate risk of houselessness by key geographic subdivisions within Mesa County known as census tract and census block group.⁸

Figures 12a and 12b show relative risk of houselessness by census tract and census

block. These maps portray the relative risk of the population within a census tract or block of becoming unhoused, with higher risk areas displayed in darker red.

Figure 12. a) Risk of houselessness by census tract; b) Risk of houselessness by census block group



Note: Risk is presented on a relative scale from 0-1, meaning that the geography with the lowest risk has a ranking of 0 and the geography with the highest risk has a ranking of 1.

Based on these risk summaries, risk is highest in Central Grand Junction (i.e., area north of the Colorado River and south of Patterson Ave., excluding the city center), Fruita, and Clifton, particularly in the southeast part of town along the Colorado River. The Central Grand Junction census tract has the highest relative risk across all risk indicators. Fruita has a relatively high risk based on a high rent-to-income ratio and a relatively large non-White population, while Southeast Grand Junction/Riverside area has a relatively high risk due to a high rent-to-income ratio, high median rent, and relatively high unemployment rate. These geographic patterns within the County can inform both prevention programming activities as well as the placement of services for those who become unhoused.

⁸ (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)

Section summary

The City of Grand Junction and surrounding communities within Mesa County have experienced rapid economic shifts in recent years that are contributing to an increase in the proportion of the population that is cost-burdened and at risk of becoming unhoused. Key economic and demographic indicators and trends, such as poverty rates, rent-to-income ratios, unemployment rates, and participation in federal assistance programs can guide the understanding of populations and geographic communities within the county that face the highest risk of houselessness and therefore can inform targeted houselessness prevention and service outreach efforts.

Key takeaways:

- Between 2016 and 2021, the cost of living has increased at a greater rate than wages, resulting in the average rent-to-income ratio approaching the cost-burdened threshold of 30%.
- Between 2016 and 2021, the percentage of occupations in Mesa County with an average rent-to-income ratio above 30% increased from 47% to 78%.
- Residents working in food preparation and serving occupations are severely cost-burdened with a rent-to-income ratio at or above 50%.
- Areas within Mesa County whose residents face the highest risk of houselessness include Central Grand Junction, Fruita, and Southeast Grand Junction/Riverside.

CAPACITY AND UTILIZATION OF EXISTING NON-MARKET HOUSING IN MESA COUNTY

To define the required service capacity in Grand Junction, as well as targets for service utilization within the unhoused population in the city and county, the assessment sought to understand the flow of individuals across the housing continuum, specifically looking at non-market housing interventions, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and subsidized affordable housing (Figure 13). This examination is separated into two key sections: Housing interventions and Supportive services. Housing interventions are presented in this section of the report, followed by Supportive services in later sections.

Figure 13. The housing continuum



Source: United Way of Olmsted County

Notes: After the completion of this assessment, the City of Grand Junction began operationalizing an adapted version of the housing continuum, included in Appendix 2 of this report.

Overview of non-market housing continuum capacity in Grand Junction

In this section, we provide summary data for each type of non-market housing, including utilization information from providers of those services in Mesa County and the relative proportion of capacity that has been utilized by PEH in the past year. Table 9 shows the service providers that are active in Mesa County and the type of non-market housing they provide, while Table 10 shows capacity estimates by service provider and in total for those that were able to provide data. Not all service providers were able to provide data on recent utilization or capacity.

Table 9. Summary of non-market housing options by organization in Mesa County

Organization	Emergency shelter	Transitional housing	Permanent supportive housing	Subsidized affordable housing
Amos Center		X		
Catholic Outreach		X	X	
Freedom Institute		X	planned	
Grand Junction Housing Authority				X
Grand Valley P & J	X	planned		
Hilltop — Latimer House	X	X		
HomewardBound — North Ave	X			
HomewardBound — Recovery Living		X		
HomewardBound — Pathways Village			X	
Housing Resources of Western CO			X	X
Joseph Center		X		
Karis	X	X	X	

Table 10. Capacity estimates by non-market housing type and organizations that were able to provide data

Service provider	Emergency shelter		Transitional housing		Permanent supportive housing	
	Total service utilization (% unhoused)	Capacity	Total service utilization (% unhoused)	Capacity	Total service utilization (% unhoused)	Capacity
Freedom Institute (2023)	—	—	—	61	—	—
Grand Valley Catholic Outreach (2023)	—	—	—	4	—	60
Grand Valley Peace & Justice — Emergency Shelter (2022)	58 (100%)	32	—	—	—	—
Hilltop Latimer House (2019 - 9/2023)	635	—	—	—	—	—
HomewardBound — North Ave Shelter (10/2021 - 9/2022)	834 (72%) ^a	135	—	—	—	—
HomewardBound — Recovery Living (2023)	—	—	—	44	—	—
HomewardBound — Pathways Village (2023)	—	—	—	—	—	66
HomewardHounds (8/2022 - 8/2023)	112 (100%)	9	—	—	—	—
Housing Resources of Western CO (2022)	—	—	14	8	—	—
Joseph Center (8/2023)	—	—	9 (90%)	10	—	—
Karis (8/2023)	8 ^b	10	8 (89%)	9	47	39
HMIS — Emergency Shelter (1/2019 - 8/2023)	3802	—	—	—	—	—
MESA COUNTY TOTAL		186		136		165

Notes: Not all service providers were able to provide data about their client's housing status (n.d. indicates no data provided); (—) indicates that a housing type is not relevant to the given provider;
^a HomewardBound percent reflects clients entering from homelessness
^b Karis data represents only active clients in September 2023

In addition to administrative data from specific service providers, the HMIS provides a different view of the most commonly accessed non-market housing services as well as key supportive services. Table 11 shows the overall number of encounters entered into HMIS and the service type sought by the individual. These estimates emphasize that emergency shelter is, by far, the most accessed type of housing service among PEH, which is not surprising since other types of non-market housing are meant to be a stepping-off point out of homelessness and, thus, away from repeat encounters in the HMIS.

Table 11. Encounters by housing or service type in HMIS: 2019-2023

Service type	Total	Proportion of total
Emergency shelter	3,802	74%
Street outreach	502	10%
Supportive services only	256	5%
Permanent supportive housing	228	4%
Rapid re-housing	169	3%
Other permanent housing	74	1%
Transitional housing	60	1%
Homelessness prevention	41	1%
TOTAL ENCOUNTERS	5,132	

Source: HMIS

Subsidized affordable housing refers to housing that is funded in part by the federal government that supports households in being able to afford market-rate housing. Based upon data accessed through HUD, Grand Junction has a total of 1,100 subsidized housing units available, and Clifton has a total of 168 units. The occupancy for these units is 81% and 88%, respectively. The average amount of time on the waitlist is substantial, with Clifton operating a 17-month average waitlist and Grand Junction an 8-month average waitlist. In 2022, there were a total of 1,849 people residing in subsidized housing in Mesa County.

Table 12 summarizes subsidized housing utilization in the county in 2022 across municipalities.

Table 12. Summary of subsidized affordable housing utilization in Mesa County: 2022

Municipality	Key figures						
	Subsidized units available	Percent occupied	Total people housed	Number of people per unit	Average months on waiting list	Average months since moved in	Percent over housed
Clifton	168	81	360	2.50	17	93	38%
Grand Junction	1,100	88	1,489	1.50	8	77	14%

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Details and perceptions of capacity by non-market housing type

As shown in Table 10, administrative data on utilization and capacity from service providers is limited in its coverage, and even complete data does not tell the full story of how different types of individuals in the community perceive existing capacity and the need to expand or right-size capacity as it relates to utilization and demand. In this section, we provide summary information gathered from interviews with key informants and lived experts to provide context and nuance to the quantification of service demand,

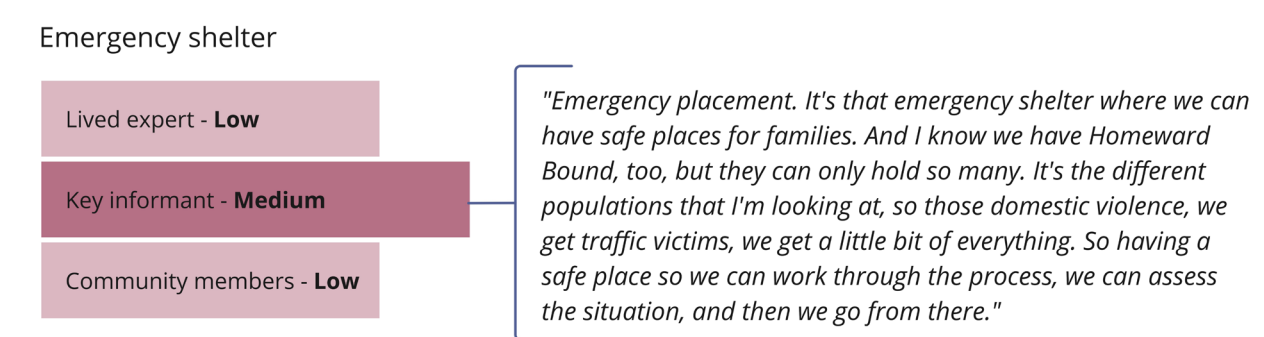
capacity, and utilization. The level of priority for each housing type identified was categorized into terciles: low, medium, or high across each participant group according to coding frequency and urgency.

Emergency shelters

HomewardBound, Grand Valley Peace and Justice, Hilltop Latimer House, and Karis each provide emergency shelter options for people who are unhoused, which are temporary accommodations designed to provide immediate shelter, safety, and basic services to individuals or families experiencing homelessness.

Each emergency shelter service provider reports being at capacity for the number of emergency beds within their facility. Notably, each emergency shelter serves different subpopulations of PEH. Karis serves transition age youth, and the Hilltop Latimer House is for individuals/families experiencing and/or fleeing domestic violence. Grand Valley Peace and Justice has facilities for both individuals who are men and for families, with 16 beds at each facility, but it is only open during winter months, which decreases local bed capacity in Grand Junction during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. HomewardHounds is a partnership between Roise-Hurst Humane Society and HomewardBound to provide temporary housing for PEH who also have pets.

Figure 14. Participant perspectives on emergency shelter priority



Emergency shelter was ranked as a low-level priority housing need by lived experts and community members and a medium-level priority by key informants (Figure 14). Many of the lived experts participating in the assessment were not interested in traditional emergency shelter options, for a variety of reasons. However, key informants noted additional emergency shelter as a gap specifically because existing emergency shelter often operates at capacity, and there are limited options for individuals with specific needs, such as those with high medical needs, those who use substances, those who are registered sex offenders, or those who cannot comfortably stay in a traditional congregate shelter.

Based on the feedback lived experts provided, it is likely that some PEH currently living outside would be more interested in accessing emergency shelter if the shelter had few rules and utilized a harm reduction model, where there are limited to no restrictions on substance use, particularly during times of the year when it is dangerously cold or hot to live outside.

Additionally, some key informants and lived experts described a need for emergency shelters that only serve specific special populations of PEH, such as shelter for women only or individuals fleeing domestic violence. Some participants noted a need for emergency shelter options and supports specifically serving individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning), who may feel unsafe accessing traditional emergency shelters and have different needs than other PEH seeking shelter.

Based on these findings, in considering emergency shelter demand and supply for Mesa County, a key consideration is the type of emergency shelter and the subpopulation intended to be served by the shelter.

Transitional housing

Transitional and non-permanent supportive housing options are offered through a handful of providers in the Grand Junction area. Transitional housing for individuals in substance use treatment and recovery are provided by Homeward Bound, the Amos Center, A Step UP, and The Freedom Institute. Karis, which serves transition age youth has both emergency housing and transitional housing beds. HomewardHounds, in collaboration with HomewardBound, provides transitional pallet shelters for individuals experiencing homelessness who also have pets.

One provider of transitional housing in Mesa County is the Freedom Institute, which currently offers 61 transitional living beds for individuals who are transitioning out of prison or jail. Based upon interview data, Freedom Institute is in the process of expanding their transitional bed capacity to 100.

Figure 15. Participant perspectives on transitional housing priority

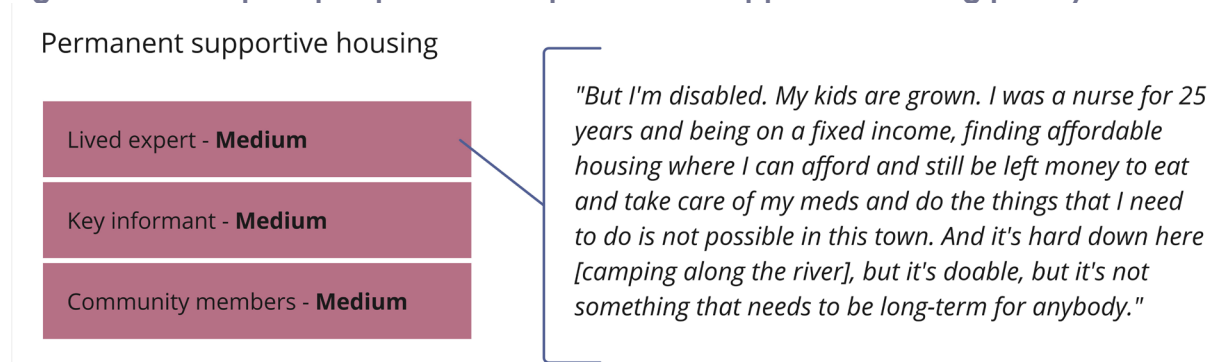


Lived experts and key informants identified transitional housing as a high priority need in responding to houselessness (Figure 15). Overall, the number of transitional housing units in Mesa County is small in the context of the current number of PEH. It is likely that many PEH, whether currently residing in an emergency shelter or living on the street, could benefit from being placed in housing that is one step further along the continuum, but short of a permanent housing situation. This could allow them to gradually build stability in their lives, while freeing up emergency housing for those entering houselessness.

Permanent supportive housing

Permanent supportive housing is long-term housing combined with wraparound supportive services, often designed for individuals with chronic physical or mental health conditions. This model provides ongoing assistance to help residents maintain housing stability and improve their quality of life and is intended to be a permanent living situation. Currently, Grand Junction has a limited number of permanent supportive housing units available for specific subpopulations, with a couple providers looking to expand their permanent supportive housing capacity. The current permanent supportive units primarily focus on serving families, youth, older women, and individuals with disabilities experiencing chronic houselessness.

Figure 16. Participant perspectives on permanent supportive housing priority



Permanent supportive housing was ranked as a medium-level priority housing need across all participant groups (Figure 16). Several agencies in the Grand Junction area currently have permanent supportive housing units, with some who have plans to expand their number of units. But again, a demand-supply gap exists for this type of housing.

As key informants described, permanent supportive housing is inherently resource-intensive and requires round-the-clock staff and access to services to sustain it, making it difficult to develop and operate new units. At the same time, participants noted there are PEH currently living outside in the Grand Junction area who would be most appropriately housed through a permanent supportive housing facility. Additionally, many participants expressed concern for the aging unhoused population, who may have a decreasing ability to independently care for themselves and a reduced number of services available to them.

Subsidized affordable housing

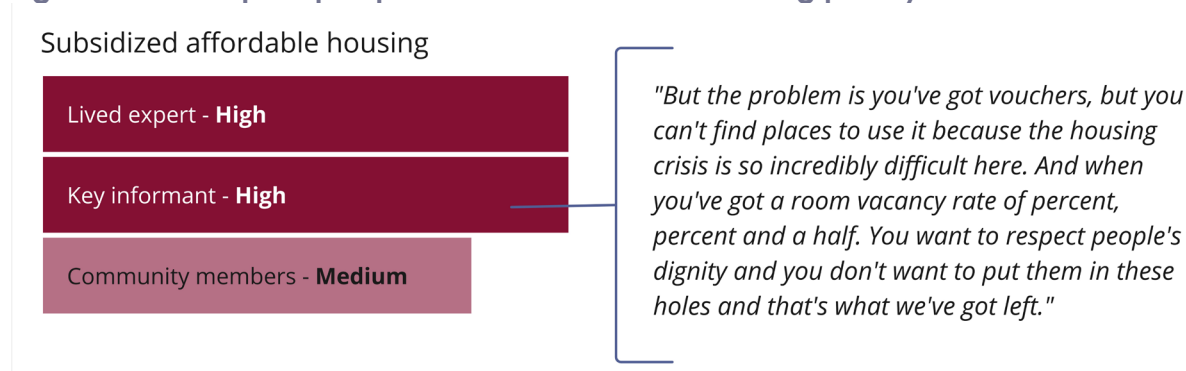
In 2022, the Grand Junction Housing Authority (GJHA) leased 1,350 housing choice vouchers, also known as Section 8 vouchers, which was a slight decrease from 2021 when 1,380 vouchers were leased. The housing choice voucher program is a federal program through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that provides rental assistance to qualifying households, allowing them to choose a rental home if it meets program requirements. As of August 1, 2023, 1,227 vouchers have been leased. Table 13 shows the historical trend of GJHA vouchers leased by year and by voucher program type.

Table 13. Housing voucher utilization by client characteristics: 2019-2023

Voucher program	2019	2020	2021	2022	January 1 - July 31, 2023
VASH - Veterans	186	173	172	168	151
Youth	7	4	7	10	10
Non-Elderly Disabled	201	215	205	198	180
Domestic Violence	65	40	41	47	45
Next Step	21	15	12	19	13
Families Transitioning from Homelessness	242	272	294	265	233
All other vouchers	635	620	649	643	595
TOTAL	1,357	1,339	1,380	1,350	1,227

Key informants and lived experts ranked subsidized affordable housing as a high priority need, and community members ranked it as a medium-level need (Figure 17). As noted previously, Grand Junction Housing Authority provides housing assistance vouchers to low-income households and other key special populations, but the waitlist for these vouchers is significant (i.e., 8-17 months), and there is no guarantee of a household being able to find housing that meets program requirements and accepts vouchers once a housing voucher is actually issued.

Figure 17. Participant perspectives on subsidized housing priority



Overall, demand for subsidized housing has long outpaced the supply. Many lived experts described the frustration of going through the process of applying for a housing voucher, moving through the waitlist, and ultimately not using the voucher by the deadline because the rentals they managed to find either would not accept the voucher or the voucher amount would not sufficiently cover the cost. A key informant speculated that the recent drop off in voucher applications is likely due not to a decrease in demand but because PEH and lower income households are discouraged by the lack of units accepting vouchers.

Given current and projected housing costs in the Grand Junction area, the demand-supply gap in subsidized housing will likely only continue to grow.

Additional elements of housing continuum identified by interview participants

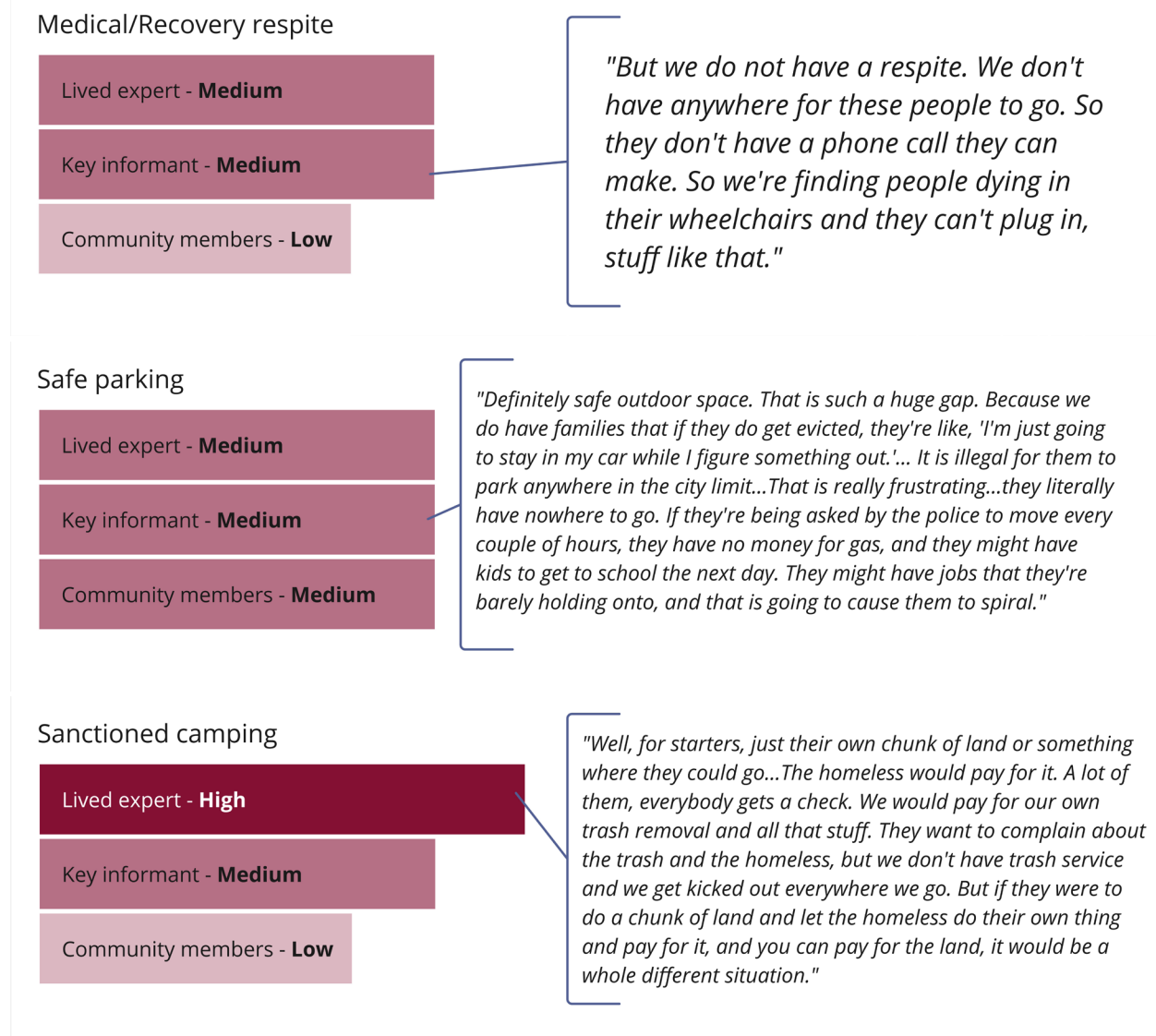
In addition to the core elements of the housing continuum, we received information from interview participants about their perspectives on medical/Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment respite facilities, sanctioned camping sites, and opportunities for safe parking lots.

Temporary housing specifically for PEH discharged from the hospital after a medical operation or individuals in recovery after in-patient substance use treatment was a gap noted as a medium-level need among lived experts and key informants and a low-level need among community members. In general, participants expressed that there is an extremely limited number of beds available to PEH in need of medical and mental health support while recovering after treatment. Often, emergency shelter facilities in the county are unable to accept clients under these circumstances because they require a high level of services. Shelters typically do not have the capacity or expertise to properly care for them, leaving those individuals with few or no options. Several key informants shared stories of not being able to connect clients with the appropriate level of care and shelter after they leave the hospital, demonstrating a dangerous and sometimes lethal gap in housing options.

Sanctioned camping and safe parking areas, or designated spaces for PEH to legally camp within the county, were noted as a high need among lived experts and key informants and a medium-level need among community members. While it is difficult to know exactly how many PEH live in camps along the river corridor, in parks, and on other parcels of public and private land, a substantial proportion of PEH in the Grand Junction area spend many of their nights camping rather than in a shelter.

About half of the 50 lived expert participants were living outside at the time of interviews. Many of those participants did not feel that HomewardBound's emergency shelter was an option for them because they had a mental or physical health condition, they were banned due to breaking the shelter's rules, or they were not interested in following the shelter's rules. Regardless of their reasons for not seeking shelter at HomewardBound, remaining shelter options for PEH are extremely limited, often contributing to PEH living outside. Additionally, several PEH who camp, expressed that they would rather camp than go to a shelter facility because it affords them independence.

Figure 18. Participant perspectives on priority of additional housing elements



As many participants noted, however, when individuals camp on public lands, law enforcement officers often force them to pick up their camp and move on a regular basis due to public health and safety concerns and violations. While many PEH who live outside would prefer camping to being in a shelter, the constant threat of having to move their belongings and start over somewhere else can be traumatizing and lead to negative encounters with law enforcement and other city and county staff. Additionally, access to basic services, such as water, bathrooms, and trash, is limited and generates significant issues for both PEH and the broader community. Based on these realities, lived experts and key informants both pointed to a gap in safe areas for PEH to camp or live out of a vehicle, and many expressed a desire to see legal camping options with basic services offered within the county.

Section summary

Across the continuum, service providers are notably at capacity with emergency shelter beds, and there are wait lists for transitional and supportive housing beds. Transitional housing was noted to be one of the highest needs in the community, in addition to more subsidized housing and sanctioned camping opportunities.

Key takeaways

- Emergency shelter is by far the most utilized and has the most units. However, for individuals for whom congregate shelter is not an option, the remaining emergency shelter options are very limited.
- The number of transitional and permanent supportive housing units is relatively small, while participants expressed they are in high demand.
- There is an overall lack of subsidized affordable housing units, especially in Clifton.
- Housing Vouchers are reaching some key populations: veterans, people with disabilities, and families.
- Participants noted areas for sanctioned camping and safe parking are significant needs, as there are currently very few places for unsheltered PEH to go.

ESTIMATED DEMAND FOR AND ADEQUACY OF NON-MARKET HOUSING IN MESA COUNTY

In an overall planning process to identify and prioritize strategies to address houselessness, estimates of existing capacity must be further analyzed in the context of estimated demand for certain kinds of housing to identify gaps and coverage in the existing system. Demand estimates are related to both populations in need and at risk as well as the overall configuration of the system. For example, the need for emergency shelter beds has a direct relationship to the affordability and availability of rental housing, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. Inherent in the process of estimating the need for an individual intervention type is the need to consider how the overall system of care is functioning for people who are at risk of becoming unhoused and those that are currently unhoused.

Overview of assumptions and methods

A detailed methodology for estimating demand and adequacy of non-market housing is included in Appendix 1. In brief, the first step toward calculating overall need or coverage in non-market housing services is to estimate capacity in the existing system. When possible, the capacity estimates in Table 14 triangulate across data presented in Table 10 related to overall capacity in the county. To complete the capacity estimates for this study, the research team drew upon multiple evidence-supported methodologies for estimating capacity of temporary emergency shelter⁹, emergency shelter, transitional shelter facilities, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing.

Estimates of potential demand in Mesa County also draw, when possible, from data presented in Table 2 and Table 11, and build in assumptions to move from general need and observed utilization of specific resources to potential demand for each type of housing. The assumption is that, especially in situations where a specific type of housing is under capacity, there will be potential demand that is not observed through utilization patterns because so many people simply cannot access the service and have not registered their need for it (for example, some people will get on wait lists for supportive housing, but others will simply not seek it out). At the same time, not all PEH will ever choose to seek certain types of housing services, and thus not every individual included in the PIT (Table 2) will contribute demand for every type of housing. In Table 14 we adjust total demand based on the estimated program usage rate to generate an adjusted estimated demand for each type of housing.

Additional practical considerations also shape demand, as the need for winter shelters depends on the weather, and demand can vary across days of the week. In Table 14 we utilize a modifier for demand for emergency shelter that reflects estimates from the literature about how demand changes with temperature. In brief, demand increases in a non-linear way as overnight temperatures move from fair (32 to 50 degrees F) to moderate (14 to 32 degrees F) to low (-4 to 14 degrees F). In 2022, Mesa County experienced 87 fair days, 123 moderate days, and 12 low days. Individual service providing organizations likely know these patterns and adjust staffing as needed to minimize unused costs. This assessment does not take into account staffing needs, nor does it examine the costs of services. Rather, it is focused on producing general estimates of need over the course of a year and comparing those estimates to the capacity within Grand Junction at the time of the needs assessment.

The results in Table 14 provide an estimate of the current capacity of four elements of the Mesa County care system for individuals who are unhoused. There is generally limited capacity for the temporary emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. Of note, the limited temporary emergency shelter capacity estimates are based in large part on the average bed nights of individuals who reside in the shelter (information gained through qualitative interviews). There is likely to be a shift in need for temporary emergency shelter services if these individuals were to access transitional

⁹ (Jadidzadeh & Kneebone, 2015)

or permanent supportive housing, or different versions of temporary emergency shelters.

Table 14. Estimated adequacy of non-market housing in Mesa County

	Estimated population total	Program usage rate	Adjusted estimated demand (people)	Average utilization per person	Estimated demand (housing-specific unit)	Current capacity (housing-specific unit)	Adequacy of current capacity
Temporary emergency shelter	385	70%	270	30 bed nights	2,831 bed nights	2,880 bed nights	10%
Emergency shelter	1,237	80%	990	10 bed nights	9,896 bed nights	8,959 bed nights	91%
Transitional housing	1,644	85%	1,397	8.4 months	978 units	128 units	13%
Permanent supportive housing	520	85%	442	8.4 months	309 units	101 units	33%

Despite the estimated near adequacy of existing emergency shelter bed capacity in the Grand Junction area, it is important to note that there currently is only one facility that operates year-round and is open to the general population (i.e. other emergency shelters serve specific subpopulations). As noted in the section about capacity and utilization of non-market housing types, several lived experts expressed that they are unable or unwilling to stay at the shelter for a variety of reasons, including mental health and medical conditions, behavioral restrictions, ban from service, having pets, being a registered sex offender, and personal safety concerns. For those who find the area's primary emergency shelter is not an option (and are not served by other shelters), there is essentially no other shelter option, impacting the overall understanding of capacity estimates. Additionally, as a result of the very limited capacity of existing transitional and permanent supportive housing options, as more people enter houselessness, the demand placed on emergency shelter options is likely compounded, a complexity that is not reflected in the current capacity estimate. The estimate provided in Table 14 was focused on the emergency shelter open to the general public. It did not account for limitations on accessibility by key population groups nor present capacity estimates based upon needs of specific population groups.

Section summary

Overall estimates of non-market housing adequacy suggest variation in adequacy, which is reflected as well in comments from participants in the section above.

Key takeaways:

- There is limited coverage of temporary emergency shelter beds.
- There is adequate coverage for emergency shelter beds, but coverage may still be limited on a night-to-night basis and for specific populations.
- Temporary emergency shelter capacity may not be adequate when weather conditions become low or moderate and demand increases.
- Very little of the demand for transitional or permanent supportive housing is currently being met.

CAPACITY AND UTILIZATION OF EXISTING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES IN MESA COUNTY

Supportive services refer to services outside of housing infrastructure that assist PEH and unstably housed individuals in building financial stability and personal wellbeing and addressing the challenges in their lives that contribute to and/or exacerbate the experience of houselessness.

Overview of existing supportive services

For each of these supportive services, we examined patterns of utilization, demand, and capacity across providers for those who are unhoused. It is important to note that many supportive services available in the Grand Junction area are also offered and provided to individuals who are housed. The continuum of supportive services is organized by the intensity of the engagement required to provide the service, moving from less to more intensive engagement.

Table 15 provides an inventory of the types of supportive services provided by organizations within the unhoused care continuum in Grand Junction and Mesa County.

Supportive services examined in this Needs Assessment include:

- Prevention and diversion services
- Street outreach
- Basic needs: Water, food, laundry
- Transportation services
- Transitional services: Workforce training, financial literacy, life skills
- Services for youth and families
- Behavioral health services

Table 15. Summary of supportive services by organization in Mesa County

Organization	Supportive services in Grand Junction area							
	Prevention services	Street outreach	Basic needs	Transportation services	Transitional services	Youth and families	Behavioral health	Case management
Amos Center			X		X		X	X
Catholic Outreach	X		X		X			X
Freedom Institute					X		X	X
Grand Valley Peace & Justice	X		X		X			
Hilltop	X		X		X	X	X	X
Homeward Bound	X	planned	X		X	X	X	X
Joseph Center	X		X		X	X		
Karis	X		X		X	X	X	X
Mutual Aid Partners	X	X	X	X				
Solidarity Not Charity	X		X					
Mesa County Libraries			X					

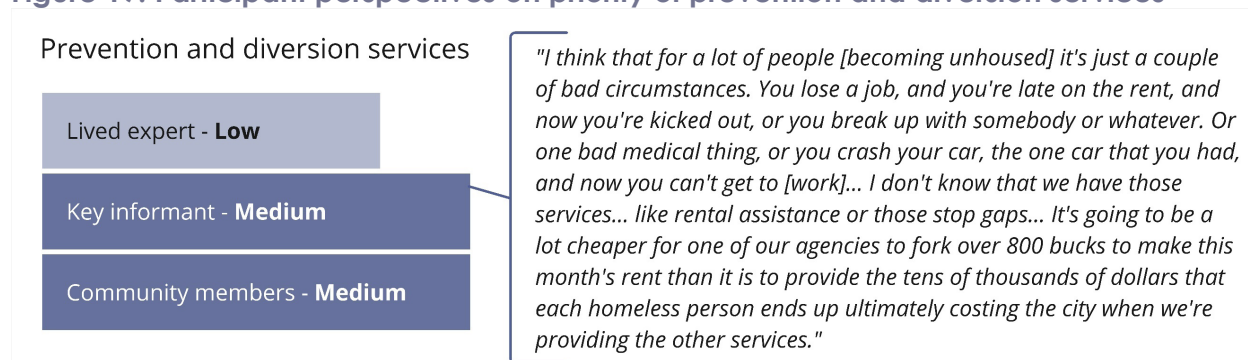
Details and perceptions of capacity by type of supportive service

Few service providers were able to provide numbers related to utilization or capacity for the specific supportive services that they offer. In this section, summary and exemplary quotes from lived experts and key informants have been provided within each type of supportive service. The level of importance for each service type identified was categorized into terciles: low, medium, or high across each participant group according to coding frequency and urgency.

Prevention and diversion services

Prevention and diversion services, or services to support individuals and households in maintaining stability and preventing them from becoming unhoused, were noted as a medium-level priority service gap by key informants and community members but a low-level priority among lived experts, likely because they were already in a situation of experiencing houselessness and focused on their needs in being able to exit houselessness (Figure 19). That said, many of the lived experts participating in the assessment noted a financial hardship as the primary reason they lost housing, suggesting that they could have benefited from prevention services to help them weather the hardship while still being able to maintain their housing situation.

Figure 19. Participant perspectives on priority of prevention and diversion services



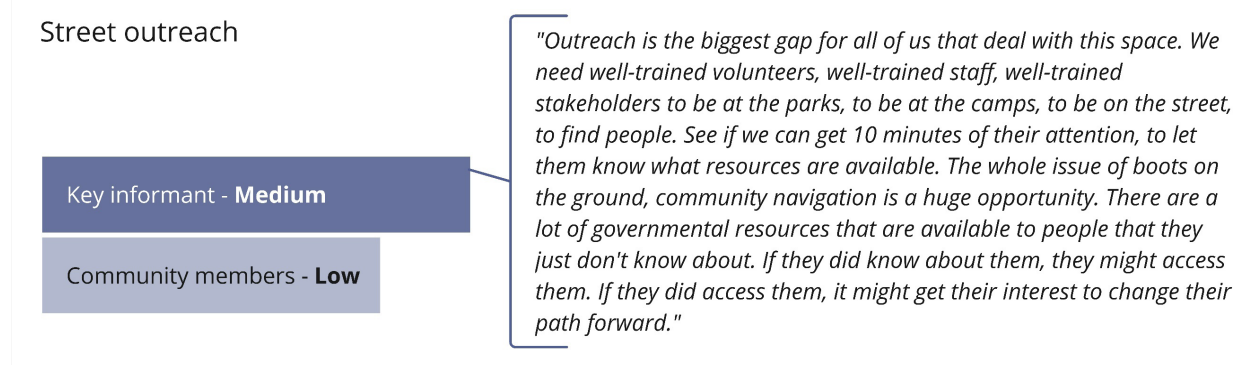
Effective prevention and diversion services can include rental assistance programs or other emergency financial assistance, budget counseling, tenant protections, and reintegration programs for individuals exiting the criminal justice system or veterans exiting active duty. According to key informants who noted these types of services as a gap, there are very few prevention and diversion programs or services available in the Grand Junction area, limiting the community's ability to keep those who may be at risk of losing housing from entering houselessness. As participants noted, preventing houselessness is a far more efficient use of resources than re-housing individuals and helps individuals to avoid the trauma of experiencing houselessness.

Street outreach

Another gap that was not specifically noted by lived experts but was described as a moderate priority need among key informants and a low priority need among community members was street outreach (Figure 20). Street outreach specifically refers to on-the-ground efforts to engage PEH in unsheltered locations in order to connect them with housing and supportive services. Currently, street outreach capacity among supportive service providers is very limited in the Grand Junction area.

As some key informants noted, a barrier in providing services for PEH was the lack of awareness of services among PEH and providers' limited capacity to do outreach regarding their services. Several key informants noted that as demand for their services remains high, there is limited ability to dedicate staff and resources toward outreach. At the same time, limited outreach results in a disconnect between PEH and the services that can help them meet their needs and ultimately enable them to exit houselessness. Further, a gap in street outreach also explains, in part, the discrepancy in the estimated number of PEH in Mesa County and the number currently captured in the BNL and other service provider data.

Figure 20. Participant perspectives on priority of street outreach



Neighbor-2-Neighbor Referral Program

The Neighbor-2-Neighbor Referral program was launched by the City of Grand Junction Housing Division staff in the Fall of 2022 in order to assist service providers with distribution of basic needs and harm reduction supplies, connect PEH with services, and support the implementation of the Grand Junction Fire Department fire mitigation plan. City staff continue to expand engagement with PEH and are working to develop a Neighbor-2-Neighbor Guidebook, provide trainings for best practice engagement in the field, and expand partnerships with service providers.

Basic needs: Water, food, laundry, clothing, safety

Another significant gap identified by participants, especially by lived experts, was facilities to meet basic needs, such as hydration stations, places to shower, and warming or cooling centers during inclement weather. While there are several services in the Grand Junction area that provide for basic needs such as food, showers, and laundry, participants expressed that existing services are limited in terms of their hours of operation and how often they can be accessed. Additionally, based on participant feedback, the level of need for these types of services outpaces the level of supply, particularly because there is a significant subpopulation of PEH living outside in the elements without reliable access to water or bathroom facilities year-round. The number of encounters these providers have with PEH is quite large, and summarized in Table 16. However, it is important to note that these are encounters, and not unique individuals served.

Table 16. Encounters for basic needs by organization

Organization	Encounters
Grand Valley Catholic Outreach – Day Center (2022)	12,436
Joseph Center – Day Shelter (10/2022 – 9/2023)	4,921
Center for Independence (1/2020 – 9/2023)	160
Grand Valley Connects (10/2022 – 9/2023)	473
Grand Valley Peace and Justice – ID and Food Services (2022)	4,261
Hilltop Family Resource Center (1/2019 – 9/2023)	311
Joseph Center – IFS, GAP, TANF, JCAPP (1/2019 – 9/2023)	1,254
Mesa County Public Library (9/2023)	280
Mutual Aid Partners (2022)	15,072
Solidarity Not Charity (2022)	27,300
211 (2022)	415

Data from the Community Resource Network (Figure 21) as well as participant perspectives shows that enrolled clients in Grand Junction have indicated a general need for food and housing, and there are also notable needs for limiting social isolation and for safety. Figure 22 shows that individuals with lived experience see basic needs and harm reduction as high-level priorities, while key informants rank basic needs as a medium priority, and the general public ranks it as a low priority.

Figure 21. Primary needs among individuals in the Community Resource Network: 2019-2023

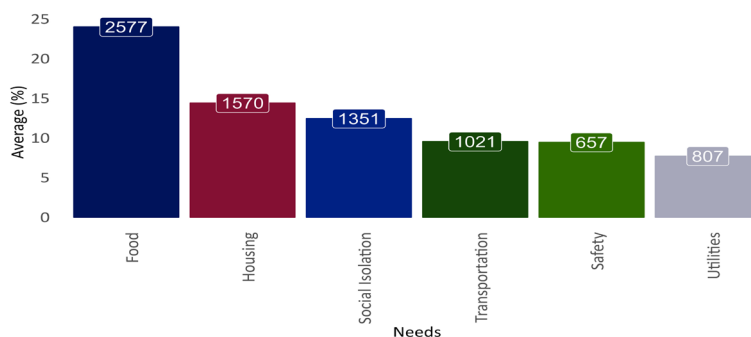


Figure 22. Participant perspectives on priority of basic needs

Basic needs and harm reduction



"Water would be... some place we could get water. Without having to sneak around and steal off somebody's faucet. We got to have drinking water. There's no way we can live without it."

Transportation services

While mentioned with less urgency than some other services, participants identified transportation as a gap or area for improvement within supportive services (Figure 23). Many key supportive service facilities in the Grand Junction area are spread out across the City of Grand Junction, and a few are located outside of the city limits. Among lived experts participating in the assessment, few had access to cars and most relied on a combination of the Grand Valley Transit buses, bikes, and walking to travel between services. Transportation options are even further limited for individuals with pets, who are unable to bring their pets on public buses.

For PEH needing to access multiple services throughout a given day, the distance between services can be significant. For example, participants staying at the HomewardBound North Ave shelter, which is closed during the day, often access shower and laundry services at the Grand Valley Catholic Outreach Day Center, which is approximately three miles away. In times of inclement weather, getting from A to B to access services and meet their needs can be especially challenging for PEH. Some participants expressed they simply do not access those services due to their transportation limitations.

Figure 23. Participant perspectives on priority of transportation services

Transportation services



"Just the extended [transit bus] hours though would make a huge difference. I think allowing people, say work out at the mall and live in Clifton without having to own a car, own two cars that kind of thing. And my husband has been legally blind his whole life, so anytime I was not available to drive him, he relied on mass transit and largely, we don't go anywhere late at night, but there has been times where I've thought, 'Gosh, it seems funny that they shut the buses down,'... Sorry, you're at the mall, you can't get home."

Participants who utilize the transit buses expressed gratitude for the service but also that bus lines are limited, as are the hours of operation. According to one lived expert, *"it's an hour everywhere,"* by which they meant it takes an hour for them to get to any of their usual destinations if traveling by bus. Similarly,

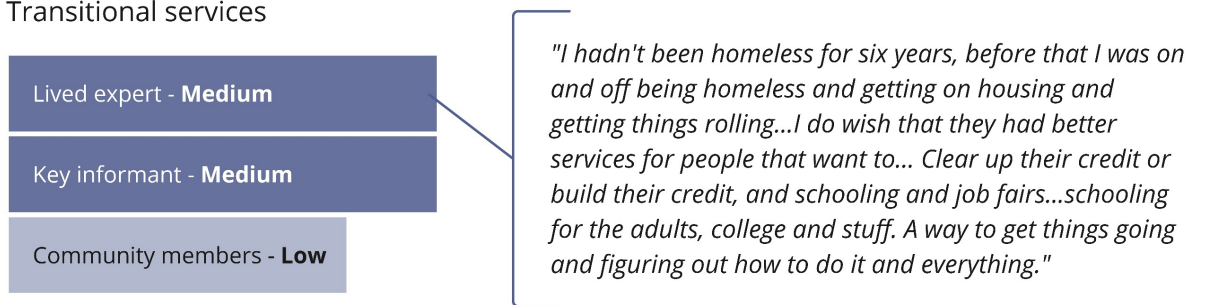
some participants felt that, without reliable access to a car, it can be extremely difficult to access services, make it to medical appointments, or maintain a job. In addition to expanded hours of operation and more stops to make the transit buses more accessible and convenient, a few participants expressed interest in services that can assist PEH with maintaining independent modes of transportation, such as assistance getting a driver's license or maintaining a bike or car.

Transitional services: Workforce training, financial literacy, life skills

Transitional and retention services, which refer to supports for individuals exiting houselessness and moving along the housing continuum, were noted as moderate needs among lived experts and key informants and as lower needs among community members (Figure 24). Such needs were most often noted in the context of individuals exiting chronic houselessness, for whom readjusting to maintain a housing situation can be challenging for a variety of reasons. Several participants noted how often individuals exiting houselessness ultimately return to houselessness when they lack transitional support or programs, such as workforce training or financial literacy education, to help them make the leap from unhoused to housed. At the same time, most services serving PEH are specifically focused on getting individuals into housing and may not have the capacity or scope of services to support individuals as they exit houselessness.

Figure 24. Participant perspectives on priority of transitional services

Transitional services

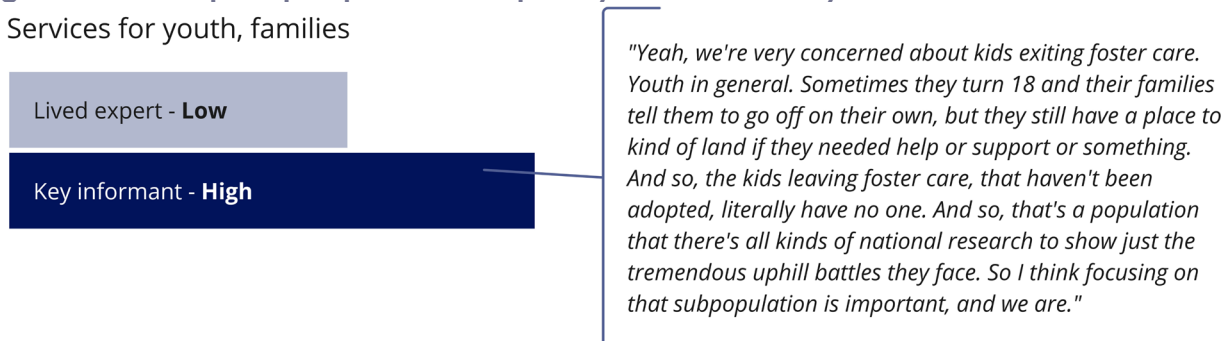


Services for youth and families

A significant gap noted by key informants was services specifically serving youth and families. While services for youth and families were far less frequently noted among lived experts, this is likely due in part to the fact that interview participants were required to be 18 years of age or older to participate, and families experiencing houselessness often fall into the category of "hidden houseless," as described in previous sections of the report. In general, unhoused youth and families are a difficult subpopulation to reach due to stigma and the fear of losing their children to child protective services. However, McKinney-Vento data suggests that houselessness among children and families is a significant and growing issue, with nearly 1,000 school-aged children experiencing some degree of houselessness in Mesa County. Given the sheer number of unhoused children and the limited service capacity for youth and families specifically, key informants expressed concern in meeting the growing and unique needs of unhoused youth and families (Figure 25).

Figure 25. Participant perspectives on priority of services for youth and families

Services for youth, families

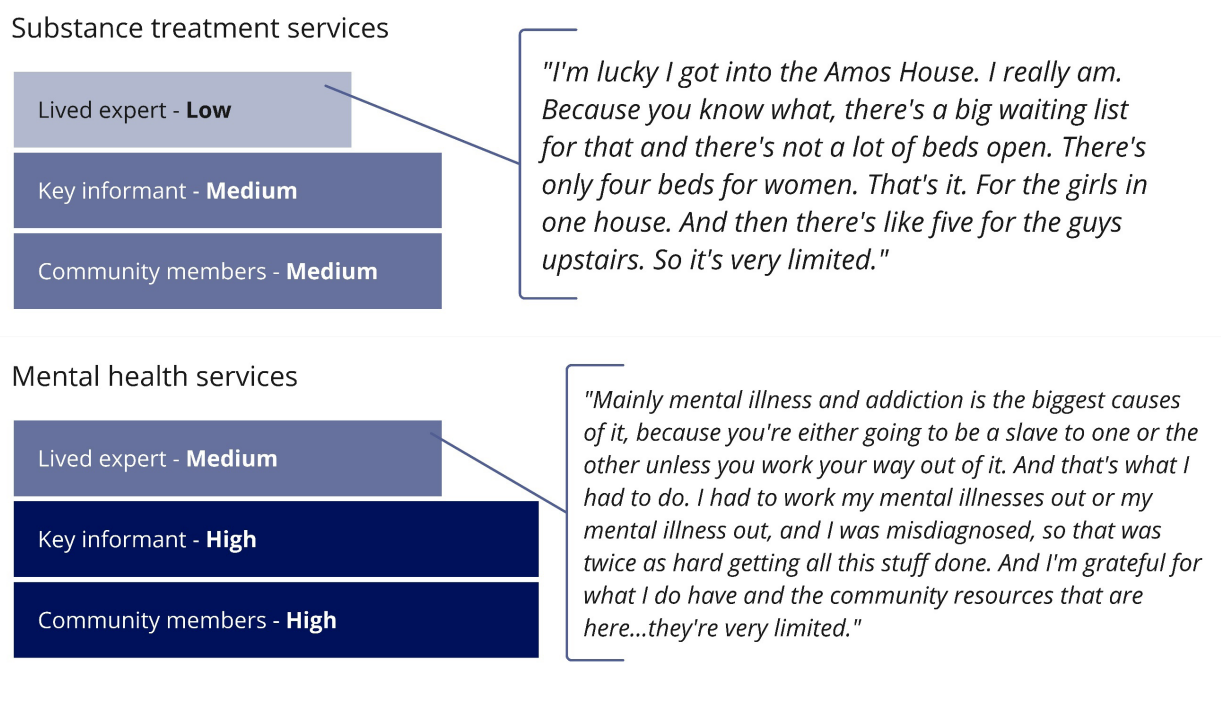


Behavioral health services

The most significant service gap identified across participant groups was behavioral health services for both individuals with mental health conditions and those with substance use disorder. In the web-based community survey, top categories of need were “more mental health services” followed by “more substance use/addiction services,” with 21% and 14% of participants selecting those categories, respectively. Behavioral health concerns were frequently mentioned across key informants and lived experts as a challenge in both providing and accessing housing and services. Several participants noted that there are limited options to receive behavioral health care in the community, especially for individuals experiencing chronic houselessness (Figure 26).

Representatives of city departments that regularly interface with PEH also identified behavioral health services as a gap, noting that many PEH that frequently use city services (e.g., parks and recreation facilities or emergency services) appear to struggle with behavioral health needs. They added that the options available to city staff to support such individuals, particularly first responders, are somewhat limited. For example, Mesa County’s primary mental health facility, Mind Springs, does not accept intakes directly from ambulances, significantly limiting the options for resolving an emergency call with an individual experiencing houselessness and in need of mental health treatment.

Figure 26. Participant perspectives on priority of behavioral health services



Understanding and addressing mental health within the unhoused population is a complex issue that involves a range of barriers. These barriers can stem from systemic, social, economic, and individual factors. Research and data regarding mental health among unhoused populations is greatly limited compared to other groups. This lack of data means there is not a precise understanding of mental health needs for those who are unhoused and hinders the development of tailored interventions and policies. However, participants (both individuals with lived experience and key informants) routinely mentioned barriers to accessing mental health care and a need for expanded mental health services.

Between October 2021 to September 2022, 33% of individuals at the HomewardBound North Ave Shelter indicated that they had a mental health disorder. Additionally, 9.17% indicated alcohol use disorder, 5.56% drug use disorder, and 5.83% both alcohol and drug use disorders. To contrast, the prevalence of drug use disorder in the previous year in Colorado is 9.29%, any mental illness in the past year is 23.71%,

and serious mental illness is 5.27% (NSDUH, 2021). Table 17 displays the prevalence of behavioral health conditions among one provider.

Table 17. Prevalence of behavioral health conditions among individuals served at HomewardBound North Ave Shelter

	Mental health disorder	Alcohol use disorder	Other substance use disorder	Alcohol and other substance use disorder
Proportion of individuals with a behavioral health need	33.33%	9.17%	5.56%	5.83%
Source: (HomewardBound North Ave Shelter)				

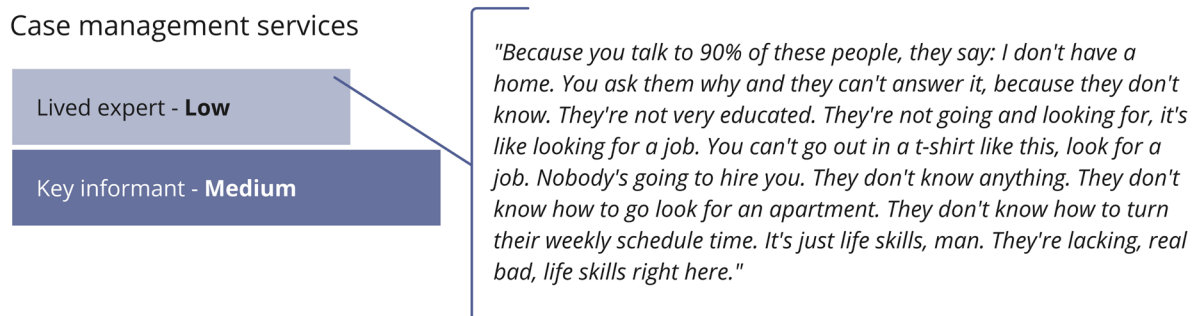
Unhoused individuals often face stigma and discrimination from society, which can further isolate them and exacerbate their mental health challenges. Stigma can prevent them from seeking help and lead to a lack of understanding and empathy from the public. A lack of social support networks and meaningful connections can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness among the unhoused population, further contributing to poor mental health outcomes.

People experiencing houselessness have restricted access to mental health services due to financial barriers, lack of insurance, transportation issues, and a shortage of specialized services for the unhoused population. Without proper healthcare, individuals are unable to receive timely diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing support for their mental health conditions. Further, houselessness itself can lead to or exacerbate mental health problems. The stress of not having a stable and safe place to live, coupled with exposure to the elements and increased risk of violence, can contribute to the development of mental health disorders.

Case management services

Lived experts often noted how challenging it can be to know what services are available to them and to complete the paperwork and processes required by many services. This barrier to accessing services points to the need for connecting more PEH with case management services to help reduce the stress and challenges of juggling multiple applications, securing necessary documentation, and making it to important appointments. Key informants noted that while case management services are available through several agencies in the Grand Junction area, the extent to which they provide housing navigation support may be limited. Further, lived experts often seemed unaware of these types of services, suggesting a gap in outreach and/or access to existing case management services.

Figure 27. Participant perspectives on priority of case management services



Section summary

In considering the supportive services available to PEH in the Grand Junction area, participants reflected upon the gaps and limitations within existing services, shedding light on the ways in which the service array could be improved to support PEH more effectively and aid in their ability to exit houselessness. Looking across the priority needs identified by participants, there is an overall need for outreach and improved coordination across services, which could strengthen the likelihood of PEH accessing supportive services that already exist. At the same time, prevention and diversion and transitional services appear to be the highest priorities with the least existing capacity in the area.

Key Takeaways:

- Prevention and diversion services were discussed as moderate priority by key informants and community members, while lived experts noted them as low priority, likely because most were already experiencing houselessness at the time of interviews.
- Lived experts described services to meet basic needs (e.g., water, food, laundry) as high priority.
- Transitional and transportation services were ranked as moderate priorities by both lived experts and key informants.
- Across participant groups, the highest priority supportive service need was expanded behavioral health services, including services for mental health and substance use.

ESTIMATED COST IMPACTS FROM INVESTING IN PREVENTION AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

There is a wide range of potential interventions and solutions to attempt to solve the challenge of addressing and supporting the unhoused population across the United States. Appendix 4 reviews potential cost savings and effectiveness by intervention or prevention service, based on prior peer reviewed research or evidence from interventions or services provided in other areas of the United States. Estimates are wide ranging and highly dependent on context, as each is targeted specifically at certain populations or only consider one intervention. While cost savings or effectiveness may differ in the Grand Junction area from the reviews presented below, the previous literature demonstrates a comprehensive evidence base and sense of what types of costs and benefits are associated with interventions and responses to houselessness.

In this section, estimates for potential cost savings of prevention program interventions and housing support with some level of treatment and case management are applied to the estimates of the Grand Junction area unhoused population below. These estimates intend to provide rough estimates and projections for costs of intervention for those at risk of becoming unhoused and for those who are currently experiencing unsheltered houselessness. All estimates and assumptions are based on information gathered from publicly available data and peer-reviewed academic literature, as well as estimates for those experiencing doubled-up houselessness and the overall population of unhoused individuals in the Grand Junction area.

Costs and benefits of interventions are highly variable and dependent on the type and level of intervention. In the majority of the research, specific populations are studied, and each received a slightly different intervention, thus leading to differences in the findings of total costs and incremental cost effectiveness ratios. However, there is a convergence of evidence showing that benefits accrue to individuals receiving the service and to society over time, dependent on the value that society places on the benefits of the interventions. We utilize information from multiple sources referenced above to generate the estimates presented below.

In addition to the high variability of costs across interventions related to houselessness, several other limitations should be noted. First, much of the research on housing support and interventions for unhoused populations is conducted through randomized control trials where there are treatment and control groups. Comparisons are made for cost savings on a per unit or per person basis between these groups. As these studies are intended to analyze the effectiveness of the treatment itself, they do not consider potential challenges with implementation of the treatment in society. It is likely that, when implemented, an intervention may only initially be available to a small subset of the unhoused population, with benefits and reach of the intervention having potential to increase over time. In our estimates, we build in the assumption that only a percentage of the unhoused population will receive the intervention and that costs will only decrease for the population that effectively receives the intervention. Additionally, we present costs as total aggregated costs rather than per person or per unit costs.

Cost benefit and potential cost savings estimates were calculated for emergency rental assistance and for expansion of the housing first approach, prioritizing the use of transitional or permanent supportive housing options without barriers or restrictions for individuals who are unhoused. In addition to these two specific cost estimates, we have compiled additional cost expectations across the continuum of care in Appendix 2.

Assumptions related to cost estimates

Prevention interventions

We base cost estimates for the potential impact of homelessness prevention interventions on findings from Phillips and Sullivan¹⁰ and a National Alliance to End Homelessness report,¹¹ as well as U.S. Census ACS 5-year estimates, and internal estimates of the Grand Junction population experiencing doubled-up homelessness. Prevention interventions typically come in the form of emergency financial assistance payments to families or individuals at high risk of becoming unhoused, or to their landlords, in order to help pay for rent and other living expenses such as utilities. We generate estimates for two populations: those that are experiencing doubled-up homelessness and those that are living at or below the poverty line in Mesa County. Assumptions made to generate the estimates are presented in Table 18.

Table 18. Cost assumptions related to prevention interventions

Risk of Becoming Homeless: The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates¹² that the odds of becoming unsheltered homeless for those experiencing double-up homelessness is 1/10 (10%), and the odds of becoming homeless for those experiencing poverty is 1/25 (4%). We utilize these estimates from the literature, as well as two other medium and low estimates, to present a range of the risk of homelessness for each population. The risk percentages are multiplied by the doubled-up and poverty populations to find the number of individuals at risk of becoming homeless:

Doubled-up population	Poverty population
Literature: 10% risk, 94 people	Literature: 4% risk, 736 people
Medium alternative: 5% risk, 47 people	Medium alternative: 2.5% risk, 460 people
Low alternative: 2.5% risk, 23 people	Low alternative: 1% risk, 184 people

Doubled-up Homelessness: We estimate that there are 940 individuals experiencing doubled-up homelessness in Grand Junction.

Poverty: There are 18,407 people living in poverty in Mesa County, based on data from U.S. Census Bureau 2021 ACS 5-year estimates.

Cost of Homelessness: It is estimated by the National Alliance to End Homelessness¹³ that the average cost per person per year of homelessness is \$35,578. These costs are a cumulation of a variety of public service costs and other costs related to homelessness.

Cost of Emergency Financial Assistance: Emergency Financial Assistance payments can be variable depending on risk, family size, and other factors. In their research, Phillips and Sullivan¹⁴ found that the average payment was approximately \$2,000 per individual. The research team uses this value for estimates.

Housing first with case management and supportive services

The costs of housing first are highly variable and dependent on the population being served and specific intervention strategies used. Cost savings occur in certain services or categories and increase in other service areas. Because of the variation in costs, we present estimates by service rather than the overall cost of housing first. Housing first is initially a costly intervention, but it has high potential to directly benefit individuals experiencing homelessness and offset societal costs of homelessness over time, especially when combined with other effective interventions across different stages of homelessness. Assumptions made to generate the estimates are presented first in Table 19.

¹⁰ (Phillips & Sullivan, 2023)

¹¹ (Sermons & Witte, 2011)

¹² (Phillips & Sullivan, 2023)

¹³ (Sermons & Witte, 2011)

¹⁴ (Phillips & Sullivan, 2023)

Table 19. Cost assumptions related to housing first with case management and supportive services

Unsheltered Homeless Population: We estimated that there are 1,360 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Grand Junction. The details of this estimate can be found in a previous section of this report.

Reduction in Homelessness from Intervention: In their randomized control trial of housing first, Rosenheck et al.¹⁵ find that the treatment group had a 25% reduction in unhoused days compared to the group that did not receive the treatment. We use this finding as our assumption for calculating the percentage of individuals who receive the intervention that exit homelessness.

Impact of Intervention on Services: Basu et al.¹⁶ estimate the average change in service utilization for individuals that receive a housing first intervention with case management and treatment compared to those that do not receive the intervention, as well as the average cost of each service. We use these estimates and costs to generate our estimates and assumptions for costs within Grand Junction.

Treatment Reach: In research, the housing first intervention is randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, providing a relatively controlled experimental environment to test its effectiveness and cost efficiency on a per capita basis relative to other interventions or no intervention. In practice, however, it is likely that the intervention will not reach the full homeless population in Grand Junction if implemented, which could be due to a multitude of reasons that are beyond the scope of this analysis. Regardless, we assume in our estimates that the intervention is applied to only a certain percentage of the population in order to not overestimate the impacts of the intervention. We make three different estimates to present a range of outcome possibilities under different treatment reach scenarios. We assume that the intervention reaches 25% of the unhoused population, 50% of the unhoused population, and then 75% of the unhoused population, and present estimates under each of these scenarios.

Table 20 shows the estimates of costs for a housing first model with treatment and case management services in Grand Junction, utilizing publicly available data and information from the literature to form our assumptions. Services and costs used are shown in the below table, and all costs are inflation adjusted to 2022 dollars. The use estimate columns provide research-based utilization patterns across public and direct services. Variation in these types of engagements between the group who received housing first as compared to the group who did not receive housing first form the basis for cost estimates in Table 22.

Table 20. Service utilization and cost with and without housing first with case management and supportive services intervention

Service	Utilization: No intervention	Utilization: Intervention	Cost
Hospitalization days	11.39 days	8.75 days	\$2,714.44 per day
ER visits	3.84 visits	2.59 visits	\$888.75 per visit
Number of arrests	0.26 arrests	0.21 arrests	\$229.93 per arrest
Jail days	13.9 days	17.9 days	\$84.51 per day
Substance Abuse treatment visits	7.9 visits	20.2 visits	\$42.20 per visit
Mental Health clinic visits	2.2 visits	3.5 visits	\$163.86 per visit
Face to face meetings	5.9 meetings	18.7 meetings	\$20.13 per meeting
Telephone meetings	0.5 meetings	5.8 meetings	\$20.13 per meeting
Temporary stable housing	\$1,484 per person per year	\$5,716 per person per year	*

¹⁵ (Rosenheck et al., 2003)

¹⁶ (Basu et al., 2012)

Table 20 summarizes the costs and implied cost savings associated with a general model utilizing housing first and supportive services. This multifaceted intervention has been seen to decrease high-intensity engagement with the whole system through decreased inpatient hospitalizations and emergency department utilization, fewer arrests, and fewer days in jail. Decreased engagement creates cost savings across the entire system. Supportive services also facilitate increased engagement with other parts of the system, such as increased utilization of substance use and mental health treatment services and meetings with case managers. This increased engagement increases overall costs. In addition, the housing first part of the model has costs that are fixed per person. In Table 20, the cost of temporary stable housing without intervention includes only the costs associated with episodic use of emergency shelter or transitional housing beds by individuals. The cost of temporary stable housing for the housing first model includes these costs, and it also the cost associated with short-term stable housing. It assumes that individuals engaged in the housing first with supportive services model will utilize both transitional and short-term stable housing options for longer than individuals who are not receiving any other services associated with a shelter or short-term bed. Thus the increased cost of housing in the housing first model as compared to the non-intervention model is due more to the increase in the number of days that an individual is housed rather than the cost of one day/night of housing.

Estimated cost impact by service type

Cost impacts from prevention interventions

We calculate cost savings as the difference in cost under an assumption that those deemed at high risk in both populations will eventually experience houselessness if they do not receive emergency financial assistance. We calculate the cost of houselessness by multiplying the population at risk by the annual cost per person. We calculate the cost of emergency financial assistance by multiplying the population at risk by the \$2,000 cost of the assistance. The cost difference is the cost of prevention minus the cost of houselessness, with a negative difference indicating cost savings. Table 21 shows the estimated cost savings of prevention activities for the doubled-up population and for people experiencing poverty.

Table 21. Cost savings from emergency rental assistance for high-risk individuals

Population	Estimate	Cost of houselessness	Cost of prevention intervention	Cost difference
Doubled-up	Literature	\$3,344,332	\$188,000	\$(3,156,332)
	Medium	\$1,672,166	\$94,000	\$(1,578,166)
	Low	\$836,083	\$47,000	\$(789,083)
Poverty	Literature	\$26,196,103	\$1,472,601	\$(24,723,502)
	Medium	\$16,372,564	\$920,376	\$(15,452,188)
	Low	\$6,549,026	\$368,150	\$(6,180,875)

Cost impacts of housing first with case management and supportive services

Table 22 shows total cost estimates for each type of service under four scenarios: the cost of no intervention and the cost of intervention for 25%, 50%, and 75% of the eligible population.

The research team first estimated the total cost of each of the services if there were no intervention by multiplying the total population experiencing unsheltered houselessness by the estimate of services with no intervention and their unit costs, which is the mean annual total cost for each service.

The team then estimated total costs of each of the services if the intervention were implemented, using the three different scenarios (25%, 50%, 75%) of population reached. The team calculated the cost for the intervention population by multiplying the total population of people who are unhoused by the percent of the population reached. Then the team multiplied this number by the estimated percentage reduction in houselessness of the intervention to get the final population for whom the intervention is effective.

The team then multiplied this value by the estimates of services with intervention and their unit costs. Then the team added the costs of the population that the intervention did not reach to get the total cost impact of the intervention by each reach scenario. For example, under the 25% reached scenario, 25% of the population is reached with an effectiveness percent of 25%. The other 75% of the population that is not reached then has costs as if there were not an intervention. When added together, this value is representative of the total costs.

The cost change is presented for each scenario, which is simply the difference in costs between the intervention group of each scenario and the no intervention group. A negative value represents cost savings, with the totals in parentheses. Total cost savings for each scenario are presented in the last row of Table 22.

Table 22. Estimated cost impacts of housing first with case management and supportive services

	Total mean annualized cost			
	No intervention	With intervention		
Service		25% of people reached	50% of people reached	75% of people reached
Hospitalization days	\$42,047,791	\$41,438,670	\$40,829,550	\$40,220,429
ER visits	\$4,641,399	\$4,546,969	\$4,452,540	\$4,358,110
Number of arrests	\$81,303	\$80,326	\$79,349	\$78,371
Jail days	\$1,597,501	\$1,626,233	\$1,654,965	\$1,683,697
Substance use treatment visits	\$453,389	\$497,509	\$541,628	\$585,747
Mental health clinic visits	\$490,267	\$508,374	\$526,480	\$544,587
Face to face meetings	\$161,498	\$183,396	\$205,294	\$227,192
Telephone meetings	\$13,686	\$22,753	\$31,821	\$40,888
Housing	\$2,018,267	\$2,377,988	\$2,737,709	\$3,097,429

	Cost change		
Service	25% of people reached	50% of people reached	75% of people reached
Hospitalization days	\$(609,121)	\$(1,218,242)	\$(1,827,362)
ER visits	\$(94,430)	\$(188,859)	\$(283,289)
Number of arrests	\$(977)	\$(1,954)	\$(2,932)
Jail days	\$28,732	\$57,464	\$86,196
Substance use treatment visits	\$44,119	\$88,239	\$132,358
Mental health clinic visits	\$18,106	\$36,213	\$54,319
Face to face meetings	\$21,898	\$43,796	\$65,694
Telephone meetings	\$9,067	\$18,134	\$27,201
Housing	\$359,721	\$719,441	\$1,079,162
TOTALS	\$(222,884)	\$(445,768)	\$(668,652)

Section summary

Each scenario presented in Table 22 represents cost savings, which increase linearly as the population reached by the intervention increases. There are some limitations which are important to note here when considering these estimates. First, these estimates represent a point in time. They do not consider potential increasing returns to a housing first intervention, which may have decreasing marginal costs over time. If the program is effectively implemented alongside other interventions, the population experiencing houselessness is likely to decline, meaning per capita returns on investment are likely to increase. Second, this analysis considers specific costs of services, which are variable. A housing first intervention with case management and supportive services will also have fixed costs in the implementation phase, which are not included here because those will specifically depend on the implementation strategy of the potential intervention plan chosen.

Key takeaways:

- Investing in prevention efforts always yields cost savings, with much larger savings associated with helping households experiencing poverty remain housed.
- The largest cost savings from investments in supportive services come from declines in hospitalizations and their associated costs.
- The largest cost increase of a housing first program is through housing costs.
- There is potential for additional social benefits associated with housing first that were not included in this assessment but may impact costs over time.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES IN UNHOUSED CARE SYSTEM FUNCTION IN MESA COUNTY

In addition to capacity and demand across the housing continuum and supportive services to aid PEH in finding stability, there are a set of key and essential system components that have been identified as vital for communities to be able to effectively address the challenge of houselessness. The essential components examined in this needs assessment included resources, processes, and education (Table 23).

Each element of the system was examined and explored in interviews with study participants, a full list of which can be found in Appendix A. Nested within each of these categories of resources, processes, and education are specific sub-themes that highlight the identified challenges, barriers, and current areas in need of improvement within the unhoused continuum of care in Mesa County and Grand Junction.

Table 23. Barriers and challenges: key themes and subthemes

Resources	Processes	Education
Housing affordability	Referrals, data collection, and coordination	Lack of awareness of services
Limited staff and service capacity	Service navigation and paperwork	Lack of community support
Limited funding	Service restrictions and availability	Stigma and public perception
	Rental requirements	

Resources

The theme of resources includes barriers related to housing affordability and the limited staffing and funding capacity of housing and supportive service agencies to be able to provide comprehensive services based on the demand they experience within their organizations.

Housing affordability

The most commonly mentioned barrier among lived experts in being able to secure housing was the current cost of housing in the area. Participants shared that housing costs have soared in recent years, and often there are no housing options available that they can afford on their income alone. Several of the participants interviewed were employed at the time of the interview; several were actively seeking employment; and many received disability income, supplemental security income (SSI), or other federal income support. Based on the income they receive and the current cost of housing in the area, participants felt that there is no realistic path forward for them to get into housing.

“Wages aren’t matchin’ it really. I mean, you’d have to work one-and-a-half full-time jobs almost, or somethin’ to even get into that. So, I, I don’t know of any other options really at this point other than just kind of us waiting until maybe things shift, or I don’t know what’s gonna happen. —Lived expert

Lived experts consistently shared that housing costs are beyond the reach of PEH, despite many of them having a source of income. The current housing market has left many participants feeling hopeless at the prospect of securing housing without some kind of financial assistance or support program. For many participants, the fundamental barrier to being able to exit houselessness and reach stability in their lives is the current cost of housing in the Grand Junction area.

Key informants echoed this barrier, as the overall lack of affordable housing inventory in the Grand Junction area, specifically for lower income households and households with Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers, which makes it difficult to assist clients in exiting houselessness. Every key informant participating in the assessment described the recent rise in housing costs and limited availability of existing affordable units as a barrier in both preventing households from losing their housing and supporting PEH to secure housing, ultimately exacerbating the incidence of houselessness in the area.

“*We see far more pain for people who are at the lowest incomes, who are now struggling to just make ends meet, and then many of them just can’t. And then, that pushes them into...situational homelessness. And, it’s a pretty desperate feeling. Our clients are coming to us really scared, and we have nothing for them. I mean, almost nothing. It’s really a bad situation.* -- Key informant

Another service provider who works with families with young children, similarly described the current housing market as causing “a level of desperation” among their clients and service providers themselves. As they shared, clients come to them saying, “Oh, okay. Now I’m unhoused. What can you do for me?” to which the provider responds, “I can refer you to community resources. We can help with some very, very basic needs, but we don’t have housing.”

Limited staff and service capacity

A common challenge noted among service providers was the high demand for services and the limited capacity to meet the demand, particularly relating to agency staffing. Agencies struggle to secure operational funding, making it difficult to offer competitive staff wages and expand their number of staff. Several key informants noted a high demand for their services, often pushing the limits of their staff and overall service capacity: “So the demand is high, the ability to meet the needs is struggling.”

While some service providers operating in the Grand Junction area for many years shared that “demand has always exceeded supply significantly,” most participants described a net increase in the demand for their services in recent years. Additionally, the overall number of agencies serving PEH in the community has increased, suggesting a growing need among area residents. As one city representative shared, “I don’t see a major shift happening here except that we have more people who are in need.”

I mean, we serve 20,000 people a year, so the demand is high. All of our housing is full, all the time. Some of the only reasons why we would have to modulate availability to housing is staff to support it in our staff-supported environments, because staffing is hugely difficult.” —Key informant

Limited staff and a reliance on volunteers were often the norm among the service providers represented in the assessment. Despite considerable volunteer support, the sheer demand for services that many providers are currently experiencing continues to spread their staff and volunteers thin.

While wages and operational funding play a significant part in the staffing equation, serving PEH and unstably housed individuals can be mentally and emotionally challenging. Therefore, it requires a particular skillset and disposition that can be difficult to recruit. As one provider shared, “We don’t have enough people who can listen and work through problems with people, and you don’t have to have fancy degrees to do that. You have to care and walk beside somebody.”

Overall, in the context of growing demand for services, staffing is a major consideration and challenge in looking to expand existing or develop new services and supportive housing models. Indeed, a participant representing Mesa County underscored that “any housing we stand up” to support PEH is “going to require a lot of workforce,” and that housing infrastructure alone will not sufficiently address houselessness.

Limited funding

The majority of supportive services available to PEH and unstably housed residents in the Grand Junction area are non-profit entities or faith-based groups that primarily rely on grant funds to support their

operations and programs. As several key informants shared, relying on grant funding to both sustain and expand services for PEH is often limiting for agencies for several reasons: Applying for grants and meeting reporting requirements once a grant is awarded is time-consuming and often cumbersome; grants are often project-oriented and limited in the types of funding they will provide; and as a result of the types of grant funding available, agencies find themselves competing with other Grand Junction area agencies for the same pot of funds. Taken together, challenges related to agency funding limit the ability for collective and sustained impact and likely discourage agencies from expanding existing or adding new services to meet the growing needs of the community.

As one non-profit administrator noted, while there are improvements within the control of agencies when it comes to strengthening services for PEH, funder support for unrestricted funding is not one of them: *“We have the talent, we can find the talent, we can collaborate better. We can communicate more with [the City]. That’s all within our control, and we should hold ourselves accountable for doing all of that. What is not in our control right now is unrestricted revenue.”*

“ *We actually know what the problem is. Funders are getting more narrow on what they fund. Funders are not wanting to fund general services... Like one example, we have one program that has 10 different funders. The program is small, and every single one of them wants to fund something different within that program, and so you have ... It’s almost not worth it, to provide the service. – Key informant*

Collectively, limitations due to grant funding create competition among agencies serving PEH. Several key informants expressed frustration relating to the competitive environment around grant funding and felt that the existing funding landscape serves as a significant barrier to the community’s ability to come together and effectively make progress toward common goals. As one service provider noted:

We have over 40, 50 services here, and they’re all fighting for the same funding. And so, we did [apply for] all that funding with the city. And we have so many programs ourselves, and we’re dying here. And we’re watching all these other places get 50, \$100,000 sent to them. And it’s like, “Well, wait a minute, but all of them call us.” So, we need some kind of safety net. And if you’re not going to give [the grant] to us, we don’t freaking care--we want to make sure that gap is filled and then we relax, we can go move on to the next thing. – Key informant

One participant suggested that there may be a role for local government in helping to address these funding-related barriers and building a better path to collective impact: *“But I think that’s where the city or even the county can be more center focused with getting the end result done versus how they get there.”*

At the same time, city staff pointed out that Grand Junction and Mesa County serve as a regional hub of services for many of the rural communities within Colorado’s Western Slope, often spreading thin the available funding resources allocated through the state. Given this broader funding context and the challenges described by service providers, it may be necessary for the city and county to leverage support from surrounding communities to advocate for additional funding support for the region.

As participants shared, the current funding landscape presents considerable barriers to the type of work local agencies are able to do and the ways in which they are able to support their operations and staff. Participants expressed a desire to move away from a funding model that results in individual agencies competing with one another and toward a collaborative one driven by community needs.

Processes

Processes are the organizational and intraorganizational infrastructure required to support a collaborative and shared engagement with both efficiently providing services to those who are unhoused and linking individuals to successful outcomes.

Referrals, data collection, and coordination

In addition to providing a standardized process for assessing and prioritizing individuals for appropriate housing and services, the BNL specifically, and coordinated entry in general, provide a platform through which service providers can actively coordinate with one another to efficiently connect individuals with needed services while avoiding unnecessary duplication of services. Further, an ideal coordinated entry system promotes transparency and collaboration among various organizations, agencies, and service providers involved in houselessness response through a system of shared data collection.

The Grand Junction area's BNL was implemented relatively recently and, as with any BNL and coordinated entry system, full and consistent participation in the BNL requires time and continuous engagement of service providers. As it stands, the Grand Junction area BNL currently lacks comprehensive and consistent data to fully understand the characteristics and needs of the unhoused population in the area. Improving the scope of the BNL and enhancing the coordinated entry system is critical to providing more efficient and effective services to individuals experiencing houselessness and ensuring that the experience of houselessness is rare and brief.

Managing BNL data presents several data quality issues due to the complex nature of houselessness and the challenges associated with data collection in this context. In the Grand Junction area, barriers to data quality include underreporting and data fragmentation, lack of standardization, duplication of records, data integration challenges (i.e., aggregating across various sources, such as shelters, housing programs, and social services, can be challenging due to differences in data formats, systems, and data-sharing protocols), and data biases (i.e., data does not accurately represent the diversity of the population, certain demographics may be overrepresented or underrepresented due to sampling biases or data collection methodologies). These limitations underscore the need for improved data collection processes; better integration of technology; and increased collaboration among service providers, key stakeholders, and policymakers to develop more accurate and timely information sharing.

According to one key informant, the BNL *"is not a functional system. That is not a true by-name list."* This participant reflected that due to the inconsistencies in data collection and coordination across providers, the current BNL cannot be relied upon to accurately understand the Grand Junction area's unhoused population and the extent to which services are being provided.

Tools for prioritization

Currently, the prioritization tool being used in Grand Junction to determine the level of vulnerability of each unhoused individual engaging in services is the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). This is an assessment tool used to measure the vulnerability and service needs of PEH (there are three versions of the VI-SPDAT: individual, youth, and family). It is designed to help prioritize individuals for housing and supportive services based on their level of vulnerability. Although the VI-SPDAT has been widely used throughout the U.S. and has contributed to houselessness response efforts in various communities, there are criticisms and concerns about its validity and effectiveness. The VI-SPDAT seeks to measure complex and multifaceted issues related to an individual's vulnerability, such as mental health, substance use, and physical health, and critics argue that attempting to simplify these complexities into a single score may not accurately capture the full scope of a person's needs.

The VI-SPDAT primarily relies on quantitative data, such as the number of emergency room visits or the number of times a person has experienced houselessness. This approach might not fully account for qualitative factors and individual experiences that contribute to vulnerability. Another concern is that assigning scores based on vulnerability could inadvertently stigmatize individuals and lead to labeling that defines them solely by their challenges rather than their potential for growth and recovery. The VI-SPDAT likely fails to adequately consider cultural differences and unique life experiences that impact an individual's vulnerability. Further, it is not a holistic tool,

in that it does not fully encompass the combination of structural, economic, social, and personal factors that result in an individual's experience of homelessness. Critics additionally argue that the VI-SPDAT focuses on immediate needs and vulnerabilities without necessarily addressing the underlying causes of homelessness, such as the social determinants of health, which may lead to individuals cycling in and out of homelessness. The VI-SPDAT has been shown to prioritize white people over BIPOC, and this may be particularly true for white females.¹⁷ However, it is important to note that other prioritization tools share similar qualities with the VI-SPDAT, and most tools lack supporting evidence for reliability and validity.

Using a tool to determine who receives services and housing can further raise ethical concerns, as it may involve making difficult decisions about who is more deserving of assistance. There may be inconsistencies in how the VI-SPDAT is administered and interpreted across different service providers, leading to variations in prioritization and resource allocation. The creators of the VI-SPDAT have endorsed retiring the tool, noting that it was not designed to be utilized in its current capacity (including the current 3.0 versions). HUD does not endorse any specific assessment tool or approach, but there are universal qualities that any tool or criteria used for coordinated entry process should include. A full list of available prioritization tools and details about reliability and validity is included in the appendix.

Best practice for coordinated entry systems is to shift towards more individualized, qualitative approaches to assessment and service prioritization. In recent years, efforts have been made to refine and improve assessment tools to better capture the complexity of homelessness and the needs of those experiencing it. Within the context of the BNL, there appears to be limited utilization of VI-SPDAT, and it is worth understanding how organizations do or do not prioritize access to services.

While the coordinated entry system and BNL have been active in Grand Junction for about four years, it was noted by multiple key informants that data sharing is still siloed and needs improvement. Another key informant discussed the limitations of the current system of data collection and the case conferencing meetings that occur between service providers in which they discuss individuals on the BNL and determine what services are available:

...but [we] really haven't figured out a good coordinated entry system. And so that's definitely an area that we are... It allows for a little bit more cherry-picking. I think there's only a certain amount of people in certain organizations that really participate in that well. And then I always have concern that all of the different options for housing aren't always represented when those meetings are happening. –Key informant

Additionally, participants touched on a dissonance between service providers regarding how data will be governed: *"With this lack of agreement on how we track information, what information we track, the fact that we have to collect something, that we should be sharing it. As long as everybody thinks that they can do it, that their way is the best way and they can do it differently and better, we're not going to advance."*

Another challenge of incomplete and inconsistent data collection and sharing is the inability to fully capture the demographics, current needs, and future service needs within the community's unhoused population. One service provider discussed how the gaps in data lead to a lack of understanding of the characteristics of PEH:

Interviewer: Do you think that homelessness, or housing instability, is impacting different populations or certain populations differently?

Key Informant: I would assume so. Without data, I don't know. It's all anecdotal. That's the problem, is we hear from [...] that they have X number of homeless [...], but I don't know where they are.

¹⁷(Cronley, 2022)

I don't know what their impact is. Are they homeless and couch-surfing? Are they homeless and living in a car? Are they homeless in our streets? I just don't know the answer to that to know how that impacts them.

Participants discussed the need for stronger partnerships and collaboration among service providers, including shelters, housing agencies, mental health services, and substance use treatment centers. They noted that partners should establish clearer referral pathways within coordinated entry, ensuring that individuals are more seamlessly connected to the appropriate services, reduce duplication of services and individual data entries, and lower the burden of intake/entry for the individual who is unhoused. The following section provides feedback on the challenges of accessing services from the perspectives of lived experts.

Service navigation and paperwork

Lived experts frequently noted specific challenges related to accessing services: navigating the different services available and the paperwork and documentation required to receive those services. Knowing what resources are available and to whom and completing the necessary paperwork for each can be confusing and overwhelming for PEH seeking services. Several lived experts described the frustration of going from provider to provider, continually having to complete forms, only to wait for services.

“ *I had to really stop and realize that I'm not the only person that needs all these services. And there is a lot of people out there, and [it] isn't like you can show up, fill out your paperwork and get [the resource] immediately. The immediate gratification was never there, and it was very frustrating...Sometimes you filled out a form and then you'd go to the place they told you to go, and they'd say, "We never got the form," and you'd have to go back out. It just seemed a lot of back and forth and a lack of communication.* – Lived expert

One woman who uses a wheelchair and is on disability joked about needing a secretary to help with all the paperwork and appointments needed to access services, including getting on the waitlist for a housing voucher. While a few of the participants interviewed had case managers supporting them with service navigation, whether through Veterans Affairs, Mind Springs, or another provider, most did not have a case manager or someone designated to support them in meeting their specific housing-related needs.

In addition to the sheer amount and frequency of paperwork that PEH are often required to complete, many services and assistance programs, particularly those tied to federal funding sources, require personal identification and documentation that many PEH have lost or had stolen while experiencing homelessness. Not having an ID or other proper documentation can be a significant barrier for PEH in both accessing supportive services or housing and in seeking employment. One participant, an 18-year-old, living in short-term housing for teens through Karis explained that he is unable to get a job because his wallet containing his ID and social security card were stolen, making it extremely difficult for him to exit homelessness.

Other participants noted the irony that comes with seeking housing and housing-related services without a current address, as one previously unhoused participant explained:

It's just kinda, it, it's hard to find the information for one, and gettin' through the application process and stuff. And it's like how are you supposed to receive a section eight letter saying that you're on the waiting list and you're ready if you don't have like a physical address that you're at, or you know, I think those things need to be thought of a little bit better. – Lived expert

While there are services in the Grand Junction area that allow PEH to receive mail, not having reliable access to mail or a phone can make the process of getting needed services difficult. Often, the path to accessing supportive services, and housing in particular, is complex and onerous for PEH, adding to the existing challenges they face while experiencing homelessness.

Service restrictions and availability

When reflecting on supportive services available to PEH, lived experts commonly expressed that the restrictions and limited availability of particular services can often serve as a barrier to being able to meet their needs. For example, the emergency shelter options available in the area have strict rules regarding behavioral conduct. Similarly, most services that provide for basic needs, such as meals and bathroom facilities, are only available during certain hours of the day.

For several lived expert participants, congregate shelter options that require clients to follow a strict set of rules are not a helpful option for them. Feeling as if shelter access comes at the expense of their autonomy, participants described using such shelter options as *“like going into jail.”* Some participants also mentioned having mental health concerns that make congregate shelters feel unsafe or anxiety-inducing. A few participants also had been banned from particular services as a result of breaking the facility’s rules and had no clear pathway for being able to access those services again. Multiple lived experts felt that they had been unfairly banned from services as a result of punitive rules and, as a result, the remaining shelter options available to them were severely limited.

Another common restriction that lived experts run up against is the “no pets” rule. A significant number of participants mentioned having pets and not wanting to part with them as a reason they do not seek out shelter resources in the area or are unable to secure housing. One participant who is currently living out of their RV noted that having dogs has *“been a big barrier as far as getting into a place.”* They went on to explain why keeping their dogs is so important to them: *“And you know, people say, ‘Well, why don’t you get rid of the dogs?’ Well, they’re family.”* For many participants, the trade-off of giving up their pets to be able to access particular services or resources is not worth it.

Several participants also shared that the operating hours for certain key services are limited and make it difficult to be able to fulfill their needs. For example, participants were grateful for the services offered by the Grand Valley Catholic Outreach Day Center but suggested that their operating hours are too limited, especially for people staying on the other end of town. Similarly, several participants expressed frustration that there are so few spaces available for them to go during the middle of the day, particularly during the heat waves of summer and cold snaps of winter.

A handful of participants also mentioned that, while they are currently unhoused and unable to afford housing, they often do not qualify for particular services because they make “too much money,” including individuals with fixed incomes from disability or SSI. Under these circumstances, participants explained that services fail to consider the other bills that they have to pay in addition to monthly rent. One participant felt that the limits on income required of services amount to discrimination against PEH who are employed. As he explained, *“It is a never-ending cycle, and I just wish something could be done to where people, just because you have full-time employment doesn’t mean you should be discriminated on because you made too much money.”*

While participants were often understanding of why services have particular rules in place and cannot be open at all hours of the day, the restrictions on services and their limited availability pose challenges for PEH, who are often navigating diverse needs and circumstances.

Rental requirements

In addition to unaffordable housing costs, another frequently mentioned barrier shared by lived experts were the fees and qualifications required to be able to even get into a rental unit.

When it comes to rental applications, participants described having to pay an application fee for each unit, which adds up in such a competitive rental market. In addition to the application fee, many lived experts mentioned the barrier of credit and criminal background checks that are typically part of the rental application process. A young single mom currently staying at Pathways Family Shelter shared that, while she does not have a bad credit score, her score is still not considered good enough to be accepted for a rental. She described the requirements of rental applicants as being unrealistic for and unsupportive of

single parents such herself.

I didn't have bad credit or nothing, but I didn't have good, like good credit. I wasn't, like the best applicant, you know what I mean?...So I never get picked for an apartment. And, and 'cause I can only work...it's a single parent income and most of the places want three times over the rent or whatever... And requirements...that are not realistic for single moms at all.

Another young mother described the same experience where her application was denied due to a low credit score: *"That's a real bummer that they look at that and go, 'Okay, well nope, your rental credit score isn't good enough.' So, and so it's like so what do I do? ...I literally don't know."* Many participants suggested that there are no housing options available to households with low credit scores or "anyone who has any sort of a criminal past or felony record" and felt that they have no realistic chance of securing a house or apartment.

Many participants also mentioned that, if one manages to make it through the application hoops and is accepted, property managers or landlords typically require first and last month's rent as a deposit. Even in instances where individuals can manage to afford the monthly rent, having to pay the deposit on top of rent is often well beyond their budget. One participant who is currently unhoused, employed, and has part-time custody of his kids explained how the upfront costs of a rental are so enormous that he cannot afford to get into housing while also continuing to pay his bills:

Even if I can get a place that goes off my income, I'm cool with that, but I can't even get into a place because they want the first month, the last month, the deposit. I can't afford any of that upfront. It may take me a year or two just to save up all the money to do it. Then I'm constantly broke because I'm homeless, and I don't qualify for food stamps. So, I'm constantly throwing out money to buy food and gas and spend money on my kids when I have my kids. —Lived expert

Most participants shared negative and frustrating experiences trying to apply for and secure market-rate rental housing. In general, they described market-rate rentals in the Grand Junction area as not being an available option to them, both due to the cost and the restrictive application requirements. Without a feasible chance of getting into a market-rate rental, participants described feeling hopeless and stuck.

Education

The topic of education with regard to barriers and challenges within the unhoused care system included lack of awareness among potential utilizers of services as well as a lack understanding among community members of the realities of the experience of houselessness.

Lack of awareness of services

A challenge mentioned by a few key informants in being able to address houselessness is a lack of awareness among PEH and unstably housed residents in the Grand Junction area about the services available to them. Further, efforts to increase awareness through outreach requires considerable time, resources, and capacity that are often limited within agencies. A lack of awareness of their services was most commonly mentioned by agencies in the context of services that seek to prevent houselessness, such as financial literacy courses, legal services, and support with applications for federal assistance programs.

One key informant speculated that there is a greater need for their services within the community than their current client base suggests, because PEH and unstably housed residents are not always aware of their services. As they explained, *"I think that there's probably a much greater need and that folks don't find out that we exist."* Another participant shared a similar observation, posing the following questions: *"How many houseless people in Mesa County know we provide free medical care? I don't know the answer to that. How many know that they can take a shower, and sleep at [facility name]? How many know that there are counseling and rehabilitative services here? A lot don't know that, I'm sure."*

Without the awareness of their services among those in need, the ability of providers to support PEH and individuals at risk of losing their housing is limited. While participants felt the solution is clear—more

street outreach—they also shared that *“outreach is definitely hard.”*

As participants noted, a lack of awareness of services points to a broader gap in street outreach among services providers in the Grand Junction area, further discussed in the supportive service section of the report. Several participants felt that, while many services see a high demand, certain programs are likely underutilized and could be offering more support to PEH and unstably housed members of the community if there was stronger outreach and, as a result, greater awareness about them.

“ I think [outreach] is very important. I think that it takes time. It definitely takes a lot of resources and a lot of capacity to do that... On top of it being heartbreaking and just extremely frustrating. It's very consuming. I think that having every organization do outreach is super important... it's so incredibly crucial to do that, but it just takes a lot of time to build that relationship and that trust. —Key informant

Lack of community support

Another major barrier noted by key informants in the effort to serve PEH and meaningfully address houselessness is a lack of understanding and compassion and, therefore, a lack of support among the broader Grand Junction area community. Participants described frequently encountering harmful myths and misinformation being used to characterize houselessness and PEH in the area and the ways in which these sentiments impact their work. As one service provider described:

It's not what people think, and I think there's a misconception. And then, once those urban legends spread out within the community, it's very hard to get the community behind these decisions that the city and the counties are trying to make. Because they're not educated, and education is huge... “Can't they just go get a job?” Well, they can't, because they have no ID, they have no social security card. It's been stolen. They would love to, but there's a process there. —Service provider

As this participant shared, stereotypes and “urban legends” regarding PEH lead to challenges building the momentum and support needed to move new policies and initiatives forward aimed at addressing houselessness at the community scale. One of the most pervasive and insidious stereotypes that participants discussed as a challenge to their work is the idea that most PEH are willfully unhoused and are not interested in seeking employment and following the societal rules required to maintain housing.

As a result of this common mischaracterization of PEH among members of the general public, participants described running up against an effort to superficially minimize the visibility of houselessness rather than substantively address it, what one participant called the *“out of sight, out of mind mentality.”* Another service provider expressed, *“my concern is really that it's working hard to address the appearance of the problem rather than actually addressing the problem.”*

In general, participants described public perception of houselessness and PEH as playing a significant role in what the community is and is not able to do with regard to addressing houselessness. Most key informants described a prevalence of negative and misinformed stereotypes about PEH as having a considerable negative impact on the work of service providers and of the community as a whole in being able to effectively move the needle on houselessness despite its growing urgency.

“ We have not encountered any clients who are homeless or facing homelessness who are doing that by choice. —Key informant

Stigma and public perception

Negative public perception of houselessness was also discussed as a barrier by lived experts, who regularly face stigma and animosity from members of the general public and businesses, including potential employers. Participants shared that their interactions with members of the broader Grand Junction community can often be dehumanizing. Several lived experts felt that there is a common sentiment of hatred for PEH among members of the public. As one participant living on the streets shared, the *“blatant disrespect”* he and fellow PEH receive from the public *“is something I’ve never seen before in my life,”* and it is perhaps the worst part about being unhoused.

Similarly, another participant staying at the HomewardBound shelter described feeling like *“there’s a lot of people that look down on the homeless as just evil”* and undeserving of resources and support. This participant went on to share, *“a lot of the homeless population, they have mental issues. I am one of them. I’m not going to keep that back. And that could possibly be a reason that they’re unable to have sustained housing.”*

The lack of understanding and compassion from members of the public was also discussed in the context of seeking employment. Several participants explained that they want a job and are actively seeking employment but living on the streets and the limited access to bathrooms, showers, and transportation result in employers refusing to hire them. As one young woman explained, *“No job will take a homeless girl, especially when I can’t take a shower every day.”* As a result, she has resorted to begging for change from passersby, many of whom make offensive gestures or yell at her rather than give her money.

Based on the stigma they face, several lived experts wished to express to city and county leadership that many of the prevalent stereotypes circulating in the community regarding PEH are inaccurate and harmful, and it is essential to hold up the voices of PEH and find opportunities to educate the public about the realities of being unhoused. Participants shared messages along the lines of *“the main push should be toward public education and advocacy, building compassion.”* By taking the time to understand what PEH experience and learning their stories, lived experts felt that the community can more readily come together and identify meaningful solutions to address houselessness.

Additional barriers or challenges

While mentioned with less frequency across the key informant participant group, some other notable barriers or challenges mentioned by key informants included: landlords who are uninterested or unwilling to support lower income households or PEH, changes within the population of PEH, and a lack of trust in and among providers.

Multiple participants mentioned that, while their agency has working relationships with some landlords and property managers, there are many landlords in the community who are primarily concerned with increasing their profits and are not interested in working with providers or their clients to help make rentals more accessible to PEH and lower income households.

Another participant noted that some PEH in the community do not trust services and their staff to support them in meeting their particular needs. As they shared, PEH have unique needs and a one-size-fits-all approach often leads to frustration and mistrust:

There’s a lot of mistrust for being in housing. I’ve heard that tons, especially amongst veterans. They don’t want to use services in the community, because they aren’t trusting of those services.

United to Solve Homelessness

As part of its implementation of the City of Grand Junction’s 13th Housing Strategy, the City Housing Division, in collaboration with United Way of Mesa County and service providers, launched the United to Solve Homelessness Campaign with a specific focus on increasing awareness of the experience of houselessness and reducing stigma toward PEH. Through the program, the city and partners have hosted poverty immersion experiences, led classes, and spoken at a variety of community events.

Homeless shelters can be dangerous. There're people who are trying super hard to be sober, and so being amongst programs oftentimes puts them in contact with people who are not sober, and so they don't want that, so they try to isolate themselves in the community, unhoused, so there's a lot of that. We hear that often. –Key informant

Another participant shared that, while service providers in the Grand Junction area often communicate with one another, there is sometimes a lack of authentic trust between providers that does not always allow space for providers to be vulnerable, take risks, or try new things. As this participant mentioned, providers often discuss the need for low barrier services for PEH, but they suggested there is also a need for “low barriers for providers to provide service,” meaning there is a need to create the space, resources, and flexibility for providers to explore different ways of doing things without the fear of failure or judgment from other providers or agencies.

Section summary

In addition to gaps and areas for improvement within housing and supportive service types for PEH, service providers face barriers and challenges in being able to effectively provide services, while PEH face barriers in being able to access those services. Key informant and lived expert perspectives provide valuable insight into understanding these barriers and challenges and the ways in which they intersect or compound with one another. Looking at the themes of resources, processes, and education, there are several notable system limitations within the continuum of care impacting the community’s ability to effectively prevent and respond to houselessness.

Key takeaways:

- The cost of housing in the Grand Junction area poses considerable challenges to service providers addressing the needs of PEH while inhibiting the ability of PEH to exit houselessness.
- Service providers described a funding environment that is competitive and limiting, challenging their ability to recruit qualified staff and effectively meet the demand for their services.
- PEH would likely benefit from more support with navigating and accessing existing services and stronger coordination among providers.
- Participants discussed the impact of stigma and negative public perceptions on PEH themselves and service providers, suggesting a need for improved, PEH-centered communication and outreach to the public.

ENGAGEMENT WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND FIRST RESPONDERS IN MESA COUNTY

There are occasions where those who are experiencing houselessness engage with first responders and/or law enforcement. Often, these incidences increase when there is insufficient housing and supportive services within a community to effectively prevent and respond to houselessness. The nature of these engagements with first responders and law enforcement is important to examine and understand, as the goal of an effective continuum of care is to limit unnecessary engagements with first responders and law enforcement. Limiting these interactions can also result in considerable cost savings. It is important to note, however, that some level of engagement between law enforcement or first responders and PEH remains necessary, such as in response to a medical emergency.

This section of the report provides a summary of activities being undertaken in the county and city by both first responders and law enforcement to offer diversion strategies and improve the efficacy of the contacts between first responders and PEH. In addition, we provide summary information on engagements over time with both first responders and law enforcement.

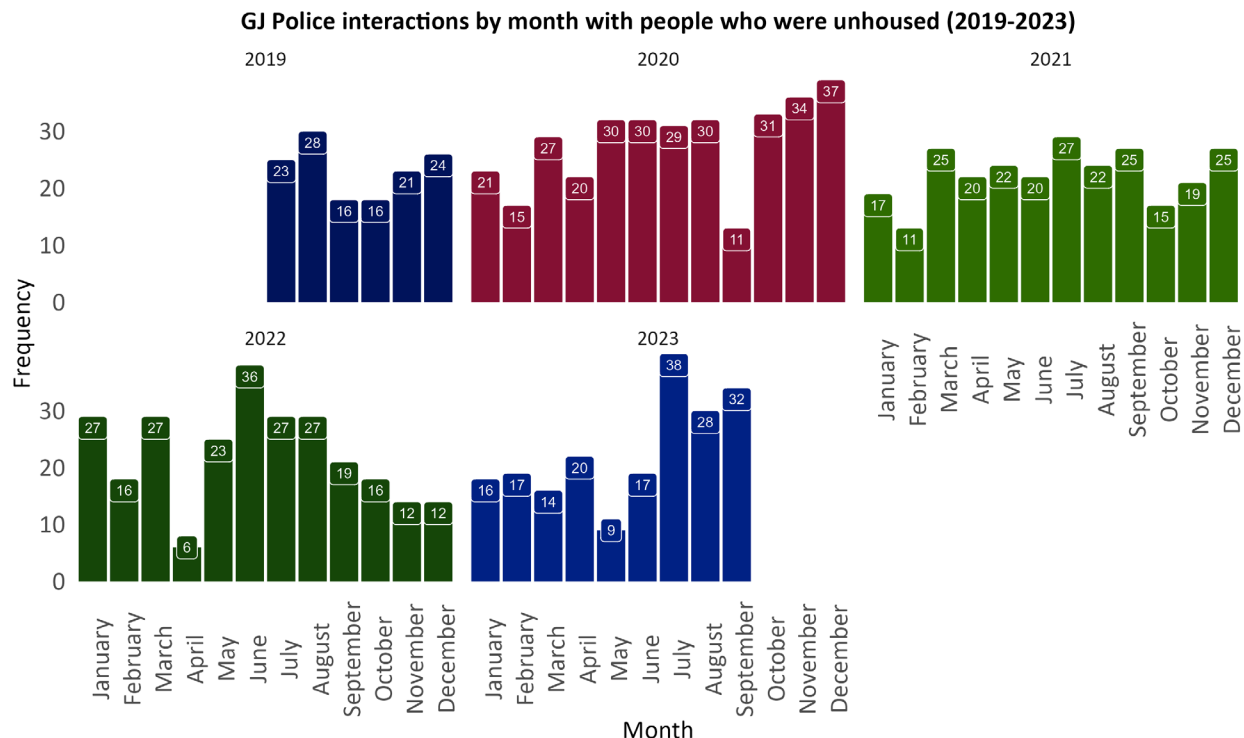
Law enforcement

Law enforcement's approach to working with people experiencing houselessness can vary widely depending on local policies, community resources, and the overall philosophy of law enforcement agencies. The relationship between law enforcement and individuals experiencing houselessness can be complex and nuanced, as it involves a balance between ensuring public safety, addressing quality of life concerns, and showing empathy towards vulnerable individuals.

“ Really, our role is we have the community care-taking function but also preventing crime and disorder... And really the vision is to be a voice at the table, to have the ability to work with the service providers, the ability to work with folks in the unhoused community and build relationships and try to help folks. Really, that's the bottom line is to try to help people and to try to help people out of that situation. —Key informant

Figure 28 shows total monthly encounters that the Grand Junction Police Department (GJPD) report with PEH between July 2019 and September 2023. On average, GJPD has 22 interactions with PEH per month, and there is not a seasonal trend for these encounters. Approximately 73% of encounters were with males. Just under 11% of these encounters included offender alcohol use, and 14% included offender drug use. Trespass was the most common incident type (18%), followed by assault (9.6%), arrest warrant (9.1%), drug violations (8%), and theft (7.3%). The most common case subject type was arrestee (51.6%), followed by subject (16.8%), victim (15.7%), and suspect (12%).

Figure 28. Grand Junction Police Department encounters with people who are unhoused: 2019 - 2023



The City of Grand Junction recently implemented a specialized unit of officers trained in crisis intervention and community outreach known as the Community Resource Unit (CRU). Community Resource Officers (CRO) in the context of houselessness are law enforcement officers who are specially trained and assigned to work directly with PEH. The primary role of a CRO is to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the unhoused population by focusing on outreach, engagement, and connecting individuals with needed supportive services. CROs proactively engage with PEH to establish rapport, offer support, and connect them with available services, such as shelters, healthcare, food, and mental health resources.

While data specifically capturing CRO interactions with PEH were not available for this assessment, interview participants, including both key informants and lived experts, expressed that the program has been a meaningful development in strengthening rapport between law enforcement and PEH and supporting PEH in accessing needed resources and services.

I usually don't have such nice things to say about the police, but I will say they, [the CROs] have definitely...gone above and beyond to, to help when they can. —Lived Expert

However, one key informant expressed that the resources and ability to recruit new CROs has been challenging. With the CRU's limited capacity, they described how other law enforcement officers are often drawn into non-emergency interactions with PEH, limiting the police department's ability to engage in other activities such as crime prevention and community engagement.

With a limited number of active CROs, lived experts living outside explained that their interactions with law enforcement are often with officers outside of the CRU programs and tend to be negative. Most often, negative interactions between law enforcement and PEH were described as PEH receiving code violation tickets (e.g., for smoking in the park or littering), or continually being asked to vacate their belongings from a public area.

A lot of times when they go to our camps, they try to get at us for littering too. And most of the times, it's not even trash, it's just our belongings and they go and try to say that we're trashing the place when it's just our belongings. —Lived Expert

Ultimately, when it comes to engagement between law enforcement and PEH, the biggest challenge relates to limited resources and a lack of safe places for PEH to go. Both from the perspective of law enforcement and PEH, there are few or no places for PEH to go once they are asked to leave public property, which often results in a cycle of negative interactions.

Jail transitional supports

Jail transitional supports attempt to assist individuals who are being released from jail or prison to successfully reintegrate into society and provide housing support, mental and behavioral health treatment, and social support networks.

In September 2022, Mesa County introduced multiagency collaboration (MAC), which aims to help people successfully transition out of incarceration and reintegrate into their community. MAC provides case management services and connects people to agencies that assist with employment, housing, transportation, basic needs, and access to mental health services or drug and alcohol treatment programs. From September 2022 through August 2023, MAC served 291 individuals, of which 165 (57%) reported recently being unhoused.

Additionally, the Support Services Division within the Mesa County Sheriff's Office includes a Transition Coordination program where coordinators support inmates at the Mesa County Detention Facility to access needed services, build community supports, and develop positive relationships with law enforcement. Transition Coordination services include assistance acquiring IDs and other personal documents, connection to recovery and transitional housing programs, and transportation upon release.

The Freedom Institute provides Work and Gain Education and Employment Skills (WAGEES) services for prison parolees and for the county jail in Grand Junction. The WAGEES program is the only program in the Grand Junction area that accepts registered sex offenders. Additionally, the Freedom Institute has 60 transitional living beds, for individuals who are shifting out of prison or jail, and they are in the process of expanding their transitional bed capacity to 100.

First responders: Fire & EMS

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Fire play an essential role in responding to incidents with unhoused individuals and addressing their needs, especially in situations that involve medical emergencies, safety concerns, or other crisis incidents. While EMS and Fire's primary role is to address immediate medical and safety concerns, their interactions with PEH can also contribute to broader efforts to address houselessness through collaboration with social services and community organizations.

Unhoused individuals may face a variety of health challenges due to exposure, lack of access to regular healthcare, and living conditions. EMS and Fire also respond to situations involving mental health crises. In such cases, responders receive specialized training to handle these situations with empathy and de-escalation techniques, connecting individuals to appropriate mental health resources when necessary. Further, they address safety concerns for people experiencing homelessness, such as fires in makeshift encampments or other hazardous living conditions.

Optimally, EMS and fire work in collaboration with local government agencies, non-profit organizations, and social services to provide a more holistic response to incidents with PEH. However, key informants expressed that the number and type of resources available in the Grand Junction area significantly limit their ability to connect PEH with needed resources. As a result, participants expressed wanting to see more resources, particularly shelter beds and mental health services, available for them to refer and/or direct PEH to.

That's generally the cause of our response, medical response of course, is the lack of resources. People utilize 911 as the entry point to get into those systems. Come the colder months, we get tons of calls for people, houseless people, that are wanting a warm bed for a while. So, they get that at the ER...There's just such a lack of resources in the area and that spills over to the 911 system... [A need is:] temporary housing, for sure, such as shelters...So basically, we're stuck with

[one emergency shelter], which is packed constantly...It's just not a very well-resourced area. –Key informant

Figures 29 and 30 provide month to month engagements by fire and EMS, respectively, with individuals who are identified as being unhoused at the time of response. Figure 31 provides detailed dispositions for those who were unhoused at the point of engagement by EMS and offers emergency department utilization among those who are unhoused, as tracked by the CRN.

Figure 29. Fire department encounters with people who are unhoused: 2022-2023

FIRE interactions by month with people who were unhoused (2022-2023)

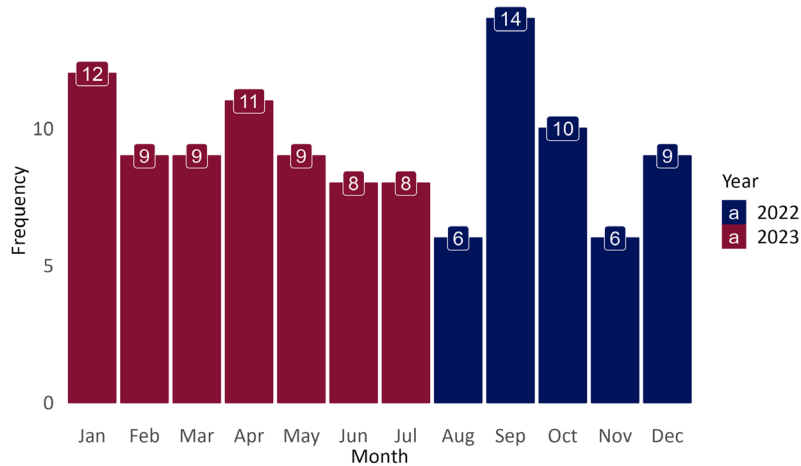


Figure 30. EMS engagements with people who are unhoused: 2022-2023

EMS interactions by month with people who were unhoused (2022-2023)

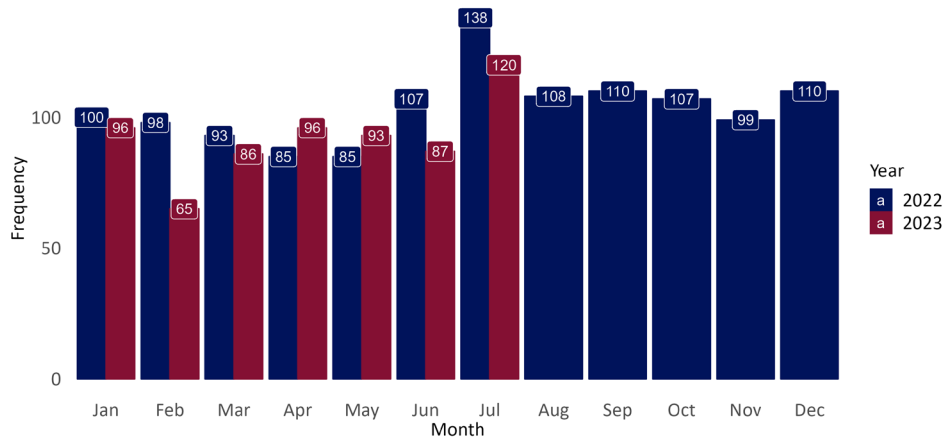
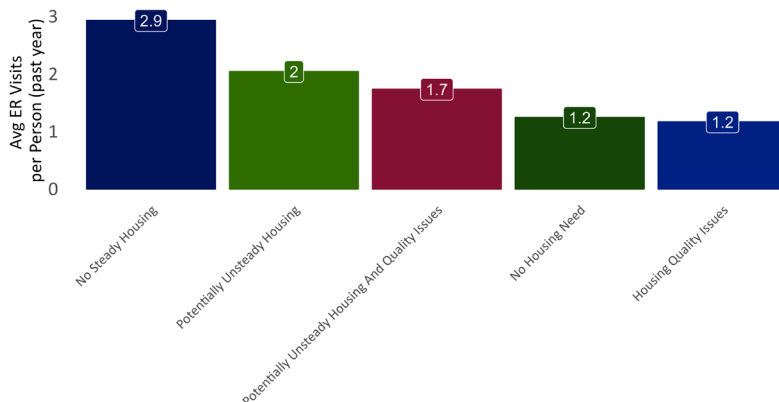


Figure 31. Emergency room visits by housing type in community resource network: 2019-2023



Across Fire, EMS, and CRN data, there appears to be consistent engagement with individuals who are unhoused within the past two years and a broad downward trend of unhoused individuals visiting the emergency room across each type of houselessness circumstance.

Section summary

First responders, law enforcement, and emergency personnel are a critical component of the unhoused continuum of care. However, when housing and supportive services are limited in their ability to prevent and respond to houselessness, demand for emergency services can often outpace capacity, leading to costly and inefficient outcomes. Understanding the number and types of encounters between medical and law enforcement services and PEH can help to pinpoint the key service gaps, barriers and challenges, and areas for improvement within the continuum of care to more effectively and efficiently provide PEH with the services they need to reach stability.

Key takeaways

- The City of Grand Junction and Mesa County have developed new programs to improve the ways in which first responders and emergency personnel respond to encounters with PEH, including the Police Department's CRU and the MAC program.
- Emergency and first responders have had consistent and significant engagement with PEH over the last two years, however, emergency room visits by PEH have declined.
- Participants attributed many of negative interactions between law enforcement and PEH to the lack of appropriate places for PEH to go when asked to vacate public or private property.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE CARE CONTINUUM

In looking across the complex picture of houselessness through diverse datasets, three key considerations emerged in the context of strengthening the Grand Junction area's care continuum as a whole in order to comprehensively address houselessness: a) the unique role of government, b) committing to a coordinated entry system, and c) centering decisions and strategies on the voices and expertise of those with lived experience of houselessness.

Key informant perspectives on role of government

Given the City of Grand Junction and Mesa County's recent engagement in addressing houselessness, including commissioning this needs assessment, a key question posed to service providers and city and county staff who participated in interviews was, "What should the role of local government be in addressing houselessness?" Overall, key informants agreed that there is an important and unique role for local government to play that is distinct from the role of service providers. Given these distinctions, key informants outlined the following roles that they would like to see the City of Grand Junction and Mesa County grow into.

Championing big picture vision and strategy

As the city and county naturally have a broader lens through which they see a community and its challenges and opportunities than an individual service provider, key informants suggested that local government has a role to play in helping generate a system-wide, big picture vision for addressing houselessness as a community and developing strategies for implementing the vision. Once a vision has been set and strategies identified, it is then important for local government to champion that vision and ensure that it is realized across service providers and the broader community.

As the champions of a big picture vision and strategy for the Grand Junction area's approach to houselessness, local government can lend its platform to a community-wide effort while ensuring that there is the necessary accountability to achieve key goals and objectives.

Facilitating coordination and collaboration

Directly tied to championing a big picture vision and strategy, key informants also felt that local government can support service providers in creating spaces to bring agencies together, facilitate meaningful conversations, and create opportunities for increased coordination and collaboration across agencies. First, having local government take on this role frees up capacity for service providers, who might otherwise need to dedicate their time and resources to communicating with other agencies. Second, by leveraging its resources and unique position external to service providers, local government can serve as a central hub for communication and collaboration across agencies and the broader community.

As one key informant shared, *"I think they should be a convener."* Another key informant expressed interest in seeing local government create *"more open partnerships, where there's a lot more open communication."* Rather than leaving communication and collaboration across agencies to the agencies themselves, participants were interested in seeing local government tackle challenging conversations, open up new pathways of communication, and support a collaborative working environment.

Funding and supporting existing services

The most commonly expressed role that key informants would like to see local government play is leveraging funding sources and supporting existing services in the Grand Junction area rather than *"reinventing the wheel, really honing in on what already exists in our community and how can we make sure that they're having success."* Participants consistently expressed that, while government has an essential role in

addressing houselessness in the Grand Junction area, their role should not be as a service provider but as a champion of existing service providers.

I know that the city just barely started their homelessness services, having that department, and I think that that's an important piece and just beginning to raise awareness as to how large the issue really is for our community. And so, I think that their responsibility is to support the service providers in our community and having more affordable housing options. And I think specifically, yeah, thinking about even if they can help support the staff that we have, that we aren't able to pay really well and more competitively, they're struggling for housing too. —Key informant

In general, key informants shared that the city and county should grow their efforts to fund and provide resources to “empower those of us in the community who do have the expertise and the focus” to directly serve PEH by exploring “different creative ways, and how they work tax dollars towards pools of money” for direct service providers in a non-competitive way.

Removing barriers and creating opportunities

Finally, key informants would like to see local government play a role in: removing systemic barriers, creating opportunities for service providers to expand their services, and incentivizing the creation of low-income housing options. In this context, the barriers discussed largely related to zoning and land use regulations that make it difficult for non-profit agencies to acquire land and develop it to provide additional housing units along the lower-income end of the housing continuum.

Multiple key informants mentioned a desire to see policies in place that limit the amount landlords can raise rents, which would also incentivize landlords to work with lower-income households. However, Colorado state legislation does not allow local governments to implement policies to restrict rents, limiting the strategies available to encourage affordable rental rates.

Key informants that are engaged in developing and managing housing inventory mentioned how challenging and costly it can be to push affordable and low-income housing projects through local processes for approval. At the same time, participants felt that expedited and more affordable processes for development approval should not be applied unilaterally but should apply specifically to non-profit developers and collaborative projects that are designed to serve unhoused and low-income households.

Key informants expressed the importance of local government supporting housing projects that aim to address houselessness and housing instability, given the growing risk of houselessness in the community.

I think it's [their] responsibility to not rubber stamp every large developer that comes here. I think it's [their] responsibility to put out active feelers for low-income housing developments. I think it's [their] responsibility to work on creative zoning. —Key informant

Many key informants felt that there are policy tools available to local government that can be used to make it easier and more financially feasible for agencies to pursue the development of creative housing solutions to address houselessness, while limiting the continued rise in housing costs that has contributed to the rise of houselessness in the Grand Junction area. Further, developing supportive policies is a clear and distinct role for local government.

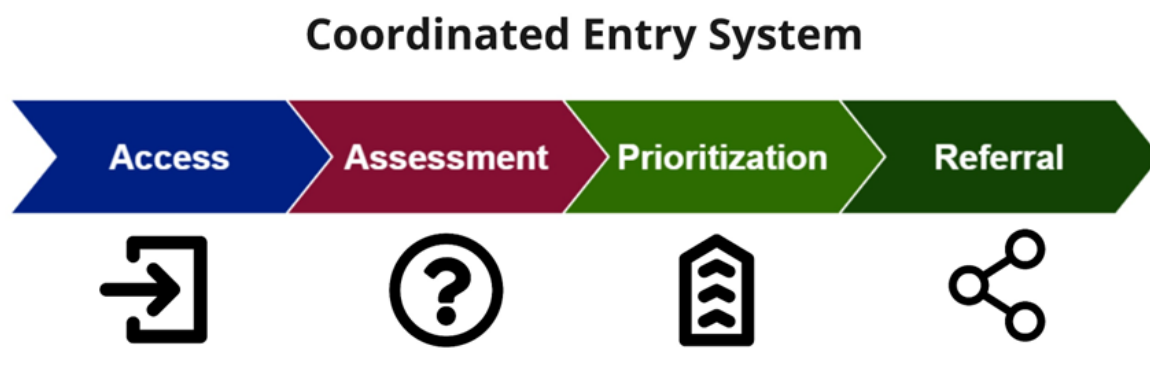
Commitment to coordinated entry system

Based on key informant feedback, the limitations of existing data collection and coordination, and national best practice frameworks, there is both a significant gap and opportunity in data collection and sharing and data-driven, collaborative decision making across housing and supportive service providers in the Grand Junction area. According to HUD's guidance, “an effective coordinated entry process is a critical component to any community's efforts to meet the goals” of the federal plan to prevent and end houselessness.¹⁸ Key

¹⁸ (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015)

considerations for realizing a robust coordinated entry system to prevent and respond to houselessness in the Grand Junction area are briefly outlined below according to the core components of a coordinated entry system: access, assessment, prioritization, and referral (Figure 32).

Figure 32. Coordinated entry system components



Access

Ensuring equitable and fair access to services requires both dedicated outreach and service promotion across key unhoused subpopulations and clear policies and procedures for coordination across providers, activities which service providers noted as challenging given limited staff capacity, funding, and collaboration. Further, in order to provide equitable and fair access, the barriers to access must be well understood and addressed, which is in part achieved through comprehensive data collection and sharing.

As detailed throughout this report, there are several service providers operating along the housing continuum and offering supportive services to PEH in the Grand Junction area, and most of the lived experts who participated in interviews for the assessment noted regularly accessing services from at least one service provider in the area. However, as both the quantitative and qualitative analyses suggest, there are limitations to understanding how and why PEH are accessing resources and services and the number of PEH in the Grand Junction area who may not be accessing services at all.

Assessment

When it comes to connecting an individual or family experiencing houselessness with appropriate resources or services, the assessment process is essential to understanding the unique needs, barriers, and vulnerability factors of each person seeking services. Assessments within a coordinated entry system determine how individuals or families are subsequently prioritized and referred to services.

An effective and equitable assessment process requires the use of a standardized assessment tool across service providers and trained staff to conduct assessments. As noted previously, service providers in the Grand Junction area utilize the VI-SPDAT tool in assessment, which may introduce biases and inconsistencies in the assignment of vulnerability scores. Additionally, it is valuable to shift toward a more individualized, qualitative approach to assessment and service prioritization that incorporates a standardized prioritization tool but does not solely rely on a vulnerability score to lead decision making. Service providers also expressed a lack of understanding about the type of data that should be collected, who is responsible for collecting and sharing the data, and how the data are used.

A number of assessment prioritization tools have been developed, but very few have any supporting evidence for reliability or validity. The tools with the most empirical support include the Rehousing, Triage, and Assessment Survey (Calgary Homeless Foundation) and the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (Downtown Emergency Service Center, Seattle WA). Alternatively, some CoCs (e.g., Calgary Homeless Foundation; Memphis/Shelby County, TN; and Montana CoC Coalition), have developed and piloted their own tools. However, those tools similarly lack an evidence base for reliability and validity. There are universal qualities that any prioritization tool used for coordinated assessment process should include:

1. Valid – The tool should be evidence-informed, criteria-driven, tested to ensure that it: appropriately matches people to interventions and levels of assistance, is responsive to people’s needs, and makes meaningful recommendations for housing and services.
2. Reliable – The tool should produce consistent results, even when different staff members conduct the assessment, or it is conducted in different locations.
3. Inclusive – The tool should encompass the full range of housing and service interventions needed to end homelessness, and where possible, facilitate referrals to the existing inventory of housing and services.
4. Person-centered – Provide options and recommendations that guide and inform, rather than rigid decisions about what people need. High value and weight should be given to a person’s goals and preferences.
5. User-friendly – The tool should be brief, easily administered, and worded so it is easily understood by those being assessed and minimizes time to utilize.
6. Strengths-based – Assess both barriers and strengths to attaining permanent housing and include a risk- and protective-factors perspective to understand diverse needs.
7. Housing first oriented.
8. Sensitive to lived experiences.

Prioritization

An effective, equitable, and fair process for determining an individual’s level of vulnerability and relative priority for housing and supportive services depends on the assessment tool used and the quality of data collected, including information about the individual’s needs, the needs of other PEH seeking services, and the supply of available services.

While service providers in the Grand Junction area utilize the VI-SPDAT and key elements of a prioritization process, such as the BNL and case conferencing, there is a lack of consistency across service providers in how individuals are prioritized for service, and data collection and management regarding supply and demand of services is often incomplete. Without a consistent process for prioritization across providers, inefficiencies are introduced in connecting PEH with needed services, and barriers to access are often exacerbated.

The community and CoC must decide what factors are most important and use all available data and research to inform prioritization decisions. Recommendations for considering how to prioritize people for housing and houselessness assistance include:

1. Significant health or behavioral health challenges or functional impairments which require a significant level of support to maintain permanent housing.
2. High utilization of crisis or emergency services, including emergency rooms, jails, and psychiatric facilities, to meet basic needs.
3. The extent to which people, especially youth and children, are unsheltered.
4. Vulnerability to illness or death.
5. Risk of continued houselessness.
6. Vulnerability to victimization, including physical assault or engaging in trafficking or sex work.

Referral

The final component of a coordinated entry system is referral. Referrals may occur at various stages of the coordinated entry process, depending on a community’s general approach to coordinated entry, but fundamentally rely on well-established communication pathways between providers and a clear understanding of the resources and services offered by individual providers as well as their capacity.

Based on limited service provider data specific to referrals received by the assessment team and feedback from key informants and lived experts, the process for referrals across service providers varies significantly, with some providers having clearly established referral relationships and others having more informal processes for referral. Additionally, the sometimes-incomplete data collection regarding service provision and supply makes it difficult to understand the full scope and nature of referrals in Grand Junction area's care continuum and likely leads to inefficiencies connecting individuals with needed and available services.

Centering lived experience

A key priority of this assessment was to engage diverse lived expert perspectives in order to understand the various experiences of houselessness in the Grand Junction area and identify the needs and gaps within the care continuum. As service providers and lived experts shared, common misconceptions exist in the Grand Junction community about the experience of houselessness and the desires and needs of PEH, ultimately impacting how the community moves forward in preventing and responding to houselessness. In order to meaningfully understand the needs of PEH in the Grand Junction area and develop appropriate and effective strategies to respond to their needs, it is essential to actively engage the perspectives of those with lived experience of houselessness in tandem with increasing awareness and understanding of the experience of houselessness among the broader community.

SUMMARY OF KEY NEEDS

Each section of the report created a sequential picture of the multifaceted unhoused population and continuum of care for those who experience houselessness in Grand Junction and Mesa County. Below is a summary of the key needs identified through this assessment according to different components of the care continuum.

Housing

■ Emergency shelter:

- ☐ Additional emergency shelter capacity serving specific subpopulations:
 - Individuals fleeing domestic violence
 - Women
 - Elderly and individuals with severe disabilities (higher care need)
 - Individuals identifying as LGBTQ+
- ☐ Low barrier shelter facility practicing harm reduction model without restrictions on sobriety, pets
- ☐ Non-congregate shelter options (e.g., hotels, motels, dormitories)

■ Transitional shelter:

- ☐ Designated space(s) where camping and/or parking and living out of a vehicle are permitted
- ☐ Semi-permanent, non-congregant shelters such as huts, tiny homes, or shelters made of pallets to support PEH who may be unable to access traditional emergency shelters while seeking permanent housing

■ Transitional housing:

- ☐ Additional transitional housing beds/units serving specific subpopulations:
 - Individuals in recovery after inpatient treatment for substance use disorder
 - Individuals in need of medical respite after receiving significant medical care and/or exiting treatment from the emergency room
- ☐ Transitional housing beds/units that specifically support individuals with building financial stability, housing navigation, and skills to maintain housing

■ Permanent supportive housing:

- ☐ Additional permanent supportive housing units

■ Subsidized housing:

- ☐ Additional units accepting housing vouchers

■ Affordable housing:

- ☐ More rental housing units that meet affordability standards of 60% AMI or lower in the Grand Junction area
- ☐ More requirements and/or incentives to include affordable units in new housing developments in the area
- ☐ Streamlined process for affordable housing development
- ☐ Reduced upfront cost to secure rental housing and fewer rental restrictions based on income or credit score

Supportive services

- Prevention and diversion services:
 - ☐ Additional emergency financial resources to support households in keeping their housing (e.g., rental/mortgage payment assistance)
 - ☐ Greater outreach/awareness of existing prevention supports offered in the Grand Junction area such as financial literacy training, budget counseling, and legal services
- Basic needs:
 - ☐ Additional places to safely access drinking water
 - ☐ Climate-controlled spaces for PEH to go during inclement weather (e.g., cooling or warming shelters)
 - ☐ Additional or expanded facilities for laundry, mail services, showers
 - ☐ Additional access to toilet facilities
- Transportation:
 - ☐ Additional or expanded public transit options
 - ☐ Programs for PEH to learn and perform bike and car maintenance
 - ☐ Additional financial assistance for transportation (e.g., gas cards, bus passes)
- Transitional services:
 - ☐ Programs to provide workforce and vocational training and education for PEH
 - ☐ Programs to support PEH in financial literacy, budget counseling, and other life skills to support them in exiting houselessness and retaining housing
- Services specific for youth and families:
 - ☐ Improved outreach and access to families to increase awareness of and engagement with existing services
 - ☐ Additional services to support youth experiencing houselessness outside of school, especially those transitioning out of foster care
 - ☐ Additional childcare services and activities for families experiencing houselessness
- Behavioral health services:
 - ☐ Additional mental health care options specifically serving:
 - Chronically unhoused individuals
 - Youth
 - ☐ Additional or expanded substance use treatment services
- Case management:
 - ☐ Additional case management options and service navigation support for PEH
 - ☐ Improved outreach to PEH for existing case management services

Emergency, first responder, and law enforcement engagement

- Formal policies and procedures for engaging with PEH in key departments
- Additional or expanded trauma-informed care and crisis intervention training
- Increased collaboration between emergency response, law enforcement, and service providers

System functioning

- Funding for service providers:
 - ☐ Unrestricted and operational funding
 - ☐ Local funding options to support collaborative rather than competitive projects
- Staff and service capacity:
 - ☐ Support for service providers in increasing staff capacity through funding and training opportunities
- Coordinated entry system:
 - ☐ Clarification regarding policy and procedures for client assessment and data collection regarding service provision
 - ☐ Training program across service provider staff regarding data collection, entry, and sharing
 - ☐ Review of VI-SPDAT as assessment tool and identification of potential biases and limitations
 - ☐ Strengthened process for referrals
 - ☐ Strategy for continuous improvement of coordinated entry system as a whole
- Public education and awareness:
 - ☐ Increased street outreach to PEH and individuals at risk of losing housing across system of services
 - ☐ Public education to dispel myths regarding houselessness and share diverse experiences of PEH
 - ☐ Additional opportunities for community engagement in building solutions to houselessness

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Affordable Homeownership Programs: Initiatives that provide opportunities for low-income individuals and families to become homeowners through subsidies, down payment assistance programs, or reduced-interest mortgages.

Affordable Housing: Housing that is built specifically to be affordable for households earning below a certain Area Median Income (AMI). In the City of Grand Junction, affordable housing is defined as housing for those earning 60% AMI or below (if renting) and 80% or below (if purchasing a home). Affordable housing is also sometimes known as “subsidized housing.”

Area Median Income: Area Median Income (AMI) - The midpoint of a region’s income distribution. AMI is often referred to in percentages — “60% of AMI” or “120% AMI.”

At Risk of Houselessness: Individuals or families who are not currently unhoused but face imminent risk of entering houselessness due to eviction, job loss, domestic violence, or other factors.

Balance of State (BoS): The “Balance of State (BoS) CoC” includes all the jurisdictions in a state that are not covered by any other CoC. BoS CoC’s include non-metropolitan areas and may include some or all the state’s smaller cities. The City of Grand Junction is part of Colorado’s BoS CoC.

By-Name List (BNL): A comprehensive roster or record that contains all the names of individuals experiencing houselessness within a community, along with additional information such as their demographics and specific needs. This list is often used as part of homeless management information systems (HMIS) and coordinated entry systems to track and prioritize individuals for housing and services. In the Grand Junction area, the BNL is currently managed by Catholic Outreach.

Case Management: A collaborative process which: assesses, plans, implements, coordinates, monitors and evaluates the options and services required to meet an individual’s health, social care, educational and employment needs, using communication and available resources to promote quality cost effective outcomes.

Chronic Houselessness: Individuals or families with a disabling condition who have been continuously unhoused for a year or more, or who have experienced at least four episodes of houselessness in the past three years.

Community Collaboration: The coordination and partnership among various stakeholders, including government agencies, nonprofits, healthcare providers, and community members, to address houselessness effectively.

Continuum of Care (CoC): The Continuum of Care (CoC) Program, through U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending houselessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse unhoused individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to individuals, families, and communities by houselessness; promote access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs by individuals and families experiencing houselessness; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing houselessness.

Cooperative Housing: A shared housing ownership model where a building or house is jointly owned by a corporation made up of all its residents. When a resident buys into cooperative housing, they do not purchase a piece of property — rather, they personally buy shares in a nonprofit corporation that allows them to live in the residence and collectively make management decisions with other residents.

Coordinated Entry System: A standardized process to assess and prioritize unhoused individuals and families for housing and services based on their level of vulnerability and need. The primary goals for coordinated entry systems are that assistance be allocated as effectively as possible and that it be easily accessible.

Cost-burdened: Households who pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.

Doubled-up or Couch Surfing: The practice of temporarily staying with friends, family members, or acquaintances due to lack of stable housing, often leading to unstable living conditions.

Emergency Shelter: Short-term accommodation providing immediate refuge for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. These shelters offer basic services such as beds, meals, and basic hygiene facilities. HomewardBound of the Grand Valley's North Ave shelter is the primary emergency shelter serving the Grand Junction area.

Functional Zero: The point where a community's homeless services system is able to prevent the experience of homelessness whenever possible and ensure that when individuals do enter homelessness, their experience is rare, brief, and one-time only. When functional zero is achieved, fewer individuals are entering homelessness in the community than exiting.

Harm Reduction: An evidence-based approach to engaging with people who use substances and equipping them with life-saving tools and information to create positive change in their lives and potentially save their lives. This approach emphasizes engaging directly with people who use substances to prevent overdose and infectious disease transmission; improve physical, mental, and social wellbeing; and offer low barrier options for accessing health care services.

Housing Affordability: When households pay no more than 30% of their gross income on housing-related expenses. This is a metric of affordability defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Housing First: Housing first is an approach to housing that prioritizes moving individuals into stable housing as a first and critical step to addressing homelessness before addressing other less critical needs, such as getting a job or receiving mental health or addiction treatment. This approach recognizes that housing stability is a crucial foundation for addressing other challenges and creating opportunities for individuals to improve their quality of life.

Homelessness: The state of lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, which may result in individuals living in emergency shelters, transitional housing, cars, motels, parks, or public spaces.

Housing Navigation Services: Services to help participants search for and obtain or retain permanent, stable residence.

Housing Stability: A state in which individuals or families have secure, stable housing that meets their basic needs and supports their overall well-being.

Housing Stability Plan: A personalized plan developed in collaboration with unhoused individuals, outlining steps and goals to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

Key Informants: Interview participants of this assessment who engage with homelessness in a professional capacity, including service provider staff and city and county staff.

Lived Experts: Interview participants of this assessment who had previously experienced homelessness or were unhoused at the time of interviews.

People Experiencing Homelessness (PEH): People who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including those staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, motels, cars, parks, or public spaces.

Permanent Supportive Housing: Long-term housing combined with supportive services, often designed for individuals with chronic physical or mental health conditions. This model provides ongoing assistance to help residents maintain housing stability and improve their quality of life. Catholic Outreach, HomewardBound of the Grand Valley, and Karis currently operate permanent supportive housing options in Grand Junction.

Point-in-Time Count (PIT): A one-night, annual count of both sheltered and unsheltered unhoused individuals conducted by communities to provide a snapshot of houselessness on a specific date.

Prevention and Diversion Services: Services aimed at preventing houselessness before it occurs or diverting individuals and families away from shelter systems by offering financial assistance, mediation, or alternative housing arrangements.

Rapid Re-Housing: An approach to responding to houselessness that aims to quickly move individuals and families experiencing houselessness into permanent housing. This intervention provides short-term rental assistance and supportive services to help people stabilize in housing.

Severely Cost-burdened: Households who pay more than 50% of their income on housing costs.

Sheltered Houselessness: Unhoused individuals or families staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or safe havens designated for unhoused individuals.

Shelter Plus Care: A program that combines rental assistance with supportive services for individuals with disabilities, particularly those dealing with substance abuse or mental health issues.

Shelter Utilization Rate: The percentage of available shelter beds that are occupied by unhoused individuals, indicating demand for shelter services.

Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Housing: Individual rooms in shared buildings, often with shared facilities, catering to individuals with low incomes or those who have experienced houselessness.

Supportive Services: Programs and interventions that address various needs of unhoused individuals, including mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, case management, and employment assistance.

Street Outreach: Programs or initiatives aimed at engaging and assisting unhoused individuals directly in unsheltered locations, connecting them with services and support.

Transitional Housing: Temporary housing, often limited to approximately 24 months, that serves as a stepping stone between emergency shelter and permanent housing. It offers residents more stability and support than emergency shelters and often includes case management, housing navigation, and supportive services.

Transitional Living Programs: Limited-term housing options, typically for key subpopulations (e.g., young adults aging out of foster care or individuals fleeing domestic violence). These programs provide supportive services for recipients of transitional housing, including counseling, childcare, transportation, life skills, educational and/or job training.

Trauma-Informed Care: An approach to care that recognizes and responds to the impact of trauma on individuals' well-being, focusing on safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment of patients.

Unsheltered Houselessness: Unhoused individuals living on the streets, in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, or other public spaces without access to regular shelter accommodations.

Vulnerability Index: A tool used to assess the vulnerability of unhoused individuals by considering factors such as physical health, mental health, substance abuse, and length of houselessness.

Wraparound Services: Comprehensive and individualized support services that address multiple aspects of an individual's life, such as housing, health, employment, and social integration.

APPENDIX 1. STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

The Grand Junction Area Unhoused Needs Assessment process was launched in June 2023. The purpose of the assessment is twofold: 1) understand the current and future needs of people experiencing houselessness (PEH) and the capacity of existing supportive services and housing stock to meet the current and future needs of PEH and 2) inform the development and prioritization of strategies to meet the needs identified, which will be detailed in a subsequent Strategies Report. The assessment team used multiple methods of data collection to generate a comprehensive understanding of the community's needs, including administrative service provider data, secondary population-level data, and stakeholder feedback. A key priority of the data collection process was to both capture a diversity of stakeholder perspectives and generate detailed feedback from individuals with the experience of being unhoused and the agencies providing services to PEH. Further, the multi-faceted analysis of multiple quantitative datasets provides an opportunity to characterize the broader economic and demographic trends impacting houselessness in the community while complementing the observations and perspectives of assessment participants.

The assessment was guided by the following research questions:

- 1. How are economic and demographic trends in the area currently impacting houselessness and housing instability, and how are these trends expected to impact houselessness in the future?**
- 2. What does utilization and capacity look like among supportive services and housing types serving unhoused and unstably housed individuals in the Grand Junction area?**
- 3. What barriers and gaps exist within the area's service array and housing stock?**

Data collection

A summary of key data sources and analytical approaches used in the assessment are described below. The types of data collected were informed by previous assessments undertaken by the City of Grand Junction and partners and other similar studies conducted in other U.S. communities.¹⁹

Primary data collection

Primary data collection consisted of one web-based survey and interviews with assessment participants. Interviews were conducted in-person or over the phone using semi-structured interview guides and lasted for a range of 15-60 minutes depending on the participant group. Key informants, such as city, county, and agency staff involved in providing indirect or direct services to PEH and unstably housed residents were recruited via email through a contact list provided by City of Grand Junction Housing Division staff. Lived experts, defined as individuals with lived experience of being unhoused in the Grand Junction area, were recruited through city houseless outreach staff, direct service providers, and the community survey. Lived experts were compensated with a \$30 Visa gift card for their participation. Between July and August 2023, a total of 78 interviews were conducted. Of these interviews, a total of 34 key informants and 50 lived experts participated (a handful of interviews were conducted with two participants, while the rest were conducted one-on-one).

The web-based survey was conducted using the survey platform Alchemer and was designed for community members, specifically adult residents of Mesa County, and distributed through targeted social media ads and a City of Grand Junction press release. The primary goal of the survey was to generate broad engagement among Grand Junction area residents on the topic of houselessness and housing instability in the community in order to understand public awareness and perspectives on the needs of the community. The survey was also used as a recruitment tool for identifying lived experts interested in participating in an interview and other community members

¹⁹ (LaGory et al., 2005); (Kushel et al., 2023); (Douglas County, Kansas, 2022)

interested in follow-up engagement for this assessment. In total, 677 community members participated in the community survey. This level of response suggests that the survey can be interpreted with a 95% confidence level, at a 4% margin of error.

Profile of interview participants

The sample for interview participants included two primary categories: Key informant and lived expert as described below. In total, 35 key informants and 50 lived experts participated in interviews.

Key Informants: Individuals professionally engaged in providing direct or indirect services and resources related to houselessness and housing instability.

- Direct service providers (e.g., staff who work at agencies that provide services to PEH)
- Indirect service providers (e.g., legal services, non-profits, and foundations)
- City, county, and government-affiliated staff and elected officials

Agencies represented in the interview sample include:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| ■ City of Grand Junction | ■ HomewardBound of the Grand Valley |
| ■ Colorado Legal Services | ■ Housing Resources of Western Colorado |
| ■ District 51- REACH program | ■ Joseph Center |
| ■ Freedom Institute | ■ Karis |
| ■ Grand Junction Housing Authority | ■ La Plaza |
| ■ Grand Valley Catholic Outreach | ■ Mesa County Behavioral Health |
| ■ Grand Valley Peace and Justice | ■ Mesa County Library |
| ■ Grand Valley Transit | ■ Mutual Aid Partners |
| ■ Habitat for Humanity | ■ Solidarity Not Charity |
| ■ Hilltop Community Resources | ■ United Way of Mesa County |

Lived Experts: Individuals with lived experience of being unhoused, whether previously or currently (e.g., individuals who have utilized housing services and experienced housing barriers or houselessness in the Grand Junction area).

Of the 50 lived experts who participated in the assessment, most were unhoused at the time of the interviews and a handful were previously unhoused. Of the currently unhoused participants; about one third were staying at a temporary shelter facility, such as Homeward Bound's North Ave or Pathways Family Shelter; about half were camping on the street, parks, or along the river bottom; and the remainder were staying with family or friends or in a vehicle.

The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 64 years old and just over half of participants were women, with the remaining participants identifying as men. The majority of participants were either born and raised in the Grand Junction area or had lived there for several years. A handful of participants had recently moved to the area because they had friends or family living there, or they had heard about particular resources for PEH, including shelter for families and substance use recovery programs.

Administrative data

In an effort to fully describe population-level demographics and services available for people experiencing homelessness in Grand Junction, administrative data (i.e., healthcare records, education records, organizational records, social services data) were requested from 35 organizations that work directly with this population. Organizations were identified with input from The City of Grand Junction Housing Division, The Grand Junction Housing Authority, and Mesa County Behavioral Health.

Data requests were sent between July and September 2023. Data were received from 29 of the 35

organizations. Most organizations were not able to provide encounter level data with unique individual identifiers but were able to provide aggregated data. Requests were tailored to each organization, however all requested data were specifically related to the unhoused population and included demographics (e.g., age, gender, race, ethnicity, marital status), housing status, length of time unhoused, length of wait list times, types of interactions with people who are unhoused, and the frequency and types of services provided. The organizations that data were requested from included:

- 211
- Amos Counseling
- By-Name List
- Center for Independence
- Colorado Legal Services
- Community Hospital
- Community Resource Network
- Family Health West
- Fire & Emergency Medical Services
- Foundations for Life
- Freedom Institute
- Grand Junction Housing Authority
- Grand Junction Police Department
- Grand Valley Catholic Outreach
- Grand Valley Connects
- Grand Valley Peace and Justice
- Habitat for Humanity
- Hilltop Family Resource Center & Latimer House
- Homeless Management Information System
- HomewardBound of the Grand Valley
- Housing Resources of Western Colorado
- Joseph Center
- Karis
- Marillac Health
- Mesa County Behavioral Health
- Mesa County Public Health
- Mesa County Public Library
- Mesa County Sheriff's Office
- MindSprings
- Mutual Aid Partners
- Roice-Hurst Humane Society - Homeward Hounds
- School District 51 - REACH program/McKinney Vento
- Solidarity Not Charity
- St. Mary's Hospital
- United Way of Mesa County

Secondary data

To capture economic conditions and trends related to the risk of houselessness, demographic and economic data were pulled from publicly available (except for All The Rooms data) secondary datasets from the following sources:

- All The Rooms (private subscription)
- Colorado Demography Office
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- U.S. Census Bureau (2021). American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021)
- Zillow

To complete the risk mapping, data from the American Community Survey were accessed and compiled by the research team. Items identified for the risk mapping originated in the research literature and were applied for this assessment at the census tract and census block groups to demonstrate different geographies of risk within Grand Junction.

Data analysis

With the consent of participants, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim using the

online transcription service, Rev. Interview transcripts were then analyzed with thematic coding methods using NVivo Qualitative Software.²⁰ A coding guide was generated by three members of the research team in two phases: 1) initial coding based on the topics and themes addressed in the interview guide and resulting interviews, and 2) focused coding where more detailed categories and emergent themes were developed based on the initial analysis.²¹

The coding analysis was completed by two members of the research team, with the intent of ensuring a high degree of intercoder reliability.²² After each coder analyzed an initial subset of transcripts, coding discrepancies were addressed through a deliberative process among the coders until agreement was reached among them.

Survey responses, administrative, and secondary datasets were cleaned and descriptively analyzed in RStudio,²³ an open-source software platform that is code-based and allows for documentation of decision making within specific lines of code.

Detailed descriptions of the methods used to generate unhoused population estimates, risk map modeling, and service capacity estimates are provided below. A review of literature and methods for cost savings and houseless interventions is provided in Appendix 2.

Estimating unhoused population of Mesa County

Based on the PIT count, as well as a few additional data sources as outlined below, we applied a method of estimating the annual unhoused population (excluding those who are doubled-up) for Mesa County. The method was developed by a group of researchers for the non-profit research organization Economic Roundtable²⁴ and uses the following equation:

$$\text{annualized estimate} = A + 51 \times B(1 - \frac{1}{2} C)$$

Where A is the PIT count of the homeless population, B is the number of currently homeless people who became homeless in the counted area during the last week, and C is the proportion of currently homeless people who had a previous homeless episode during the last year.

Using the 2023 PIT counts, as well as data from the BNL, we estimate 1,360 individuals have been unhoused in Mesa County over the past 12-months.

In addition to this estimate of the unhoused population, we also identified a method for estimating the doubled-up population overall, as McKinney-Vento doubled-up totals only include families with school aged children.

Estimates for doubled-up houselessness for the Grand Junction Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) are estimated using ACS microdata gathered from IPUMS,²⁵ and following the methodology of Richard et al.²⁶ PUMAs are areas defined by the US Census Bureau with populations of roughly 100,000 people and are the smallest geographical area for which ACS microdata are available.

We use the same data and methods utilized by Richard et al.²⁷ to estimate doubled-up houselessness in the Grand Junction PUMA. Doubled-up houselessness is defined as poor or near-poor individuals in a poor

²⁰ Lumivero, LLC, “NVivo,” 2023, <https://lumivero.com/products/nvivo/>.

¹⁴ (Glaser, 1978); (Saldaña, 2009).

²² (Creswell & Poth, 2017); (Saldaña, 2009)

²³ (R Core Team, 2021)

²⁴ (Carlen, 2018)

²⁵ (Ruggles et al., 2023)

²⁶ (Richard et al., 2022)

²⁷(Richard et al., 2022)

or near-poor household (at or below 125% of a geographically adjusted poverty threshold) who meet the following conditions: a relative that the household head does not customarily take responsibility for (based on age and relationship); or a nonrelative who is not a partner and not formally sharing in household costs (not roomers/roommates). Additionally, single adult children and relatives over 65 are seen as a householder's responsibility, so those cases are included in estimates only if the household is overcrowded.

The doubled-up estimate also includes a geographically adjusted poverty measure, a measure of a household's ability to afford housing based solely on the household's income. This measure uses area median rents for a standard unit (two-bedroom units with full kitchen and plumbing facilities) and adjusting the portion of a household's poverty threshold allocated toward housing, based on housing tenure status group (owning vs. renting).

Mapping risk of houselessness by census tract and census block group

The risk of houselessness within Grand Junction and surrounding communities was assessed using the variables listed below according to Census Tract and Census Block Group designations.

The variables included in the risk mapping are:

- Unemployment rate
- Percent of the population that is non-White
- Poverty rate
- Number of housing units per capita
- Median rent
- Rent as percentage of gross income
- Percentage of households with public assistance income (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, SNAP)
- Percentage of the population with a disability

Each variable was incorporated in a risk model that was calculated by Census Tract and Census Block Group. The Census Block Group risk maps do not include the percentage of the population with a disability, as there were no data available for that variable at the block group level. Additionally, some census blocks did not have estimates in the ACS for median rent. When data were unavailable, median rent for the census tract that the block group is in was used.

To compare risk across geographies and variables, the data were first normalized to be on the same scale. Specifically, all variables were scaled to fall between zero and one, where the highest value of a single variable across geography receives a value of one, and the lowest value of that variable receives a value of zero. For example, the census tract with the highest unemployment rate has a value of one, and the census tract with the lowest unemployment rate has a value of zero. Higher values represent a higher risk of becoming unhoused, and lower values represent lower risk. Once all variables are normalized, the average risk across all variables is calculated by census tract or block group. Each variable is given equal weight.

The average across all of the variables represents the final unhoused risk score. The risk scores are relative, meaning that the census tract or block group with the highest risk score (a score of 1), has the highest risk for people becoming unhoused relative to all other census tracts or blocks in the Grand Junction area. The census tract or block group with the smallest risk score (a score of zero), has the lowest risk relative to all other census tracts or blocks.

Capacity estimates

Capacity estimates were based upon a methodology developed by JG Research & Evaluation. This methodology is based upon the JG team's CAST assessment approach for human service system capacity. The method has been published in peer-reviewed publications, *Preventing Chronic Disease* and *Substance Abuse*, and used to complete assessments in five states.

The core of the assessment approach is the following equation, which is used for CAST estimates:

$$\frac{\text{Relevant population} * \text{Program usage rate} * \text{Frequency}}{\text{Group size}}$$

Relevant population – Estimate of the total number of individuals in a county who could use the intervention

Usage rate – Estimate of the eligible population who are likely to use the service

Frequency – Estimate of the frequency with which the population will use the service in one year

Group size – Estimate of the total number of individuals who are served by an intervention (units vary by intervention type)

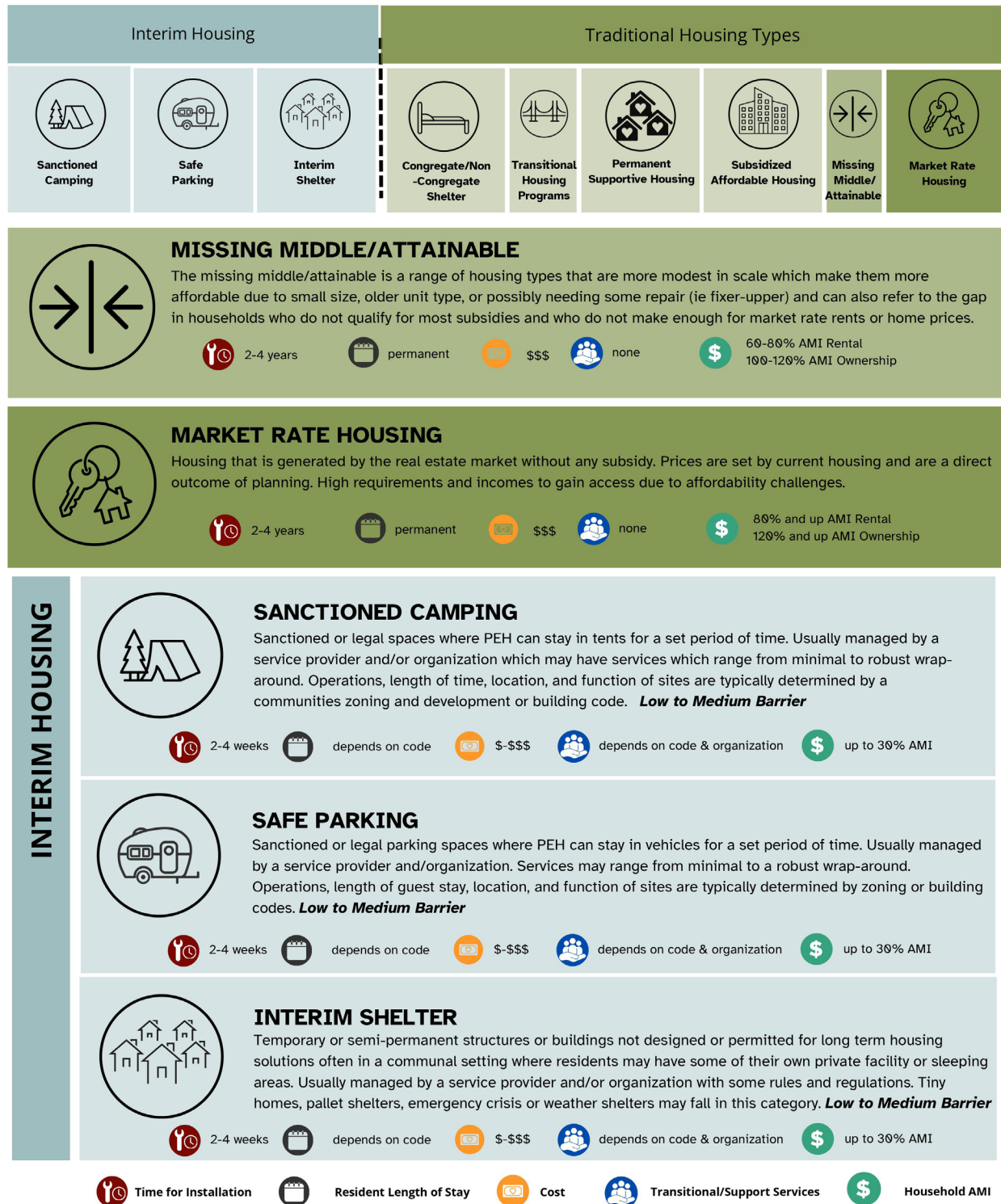
Estimates for the equation were identified by the research team, drawing from both service utilization records in Mesa County and the scientific literature on service utilization patterns. When data were not available, perspectives from key informants and local stakeholders provided the basis for the estimates.

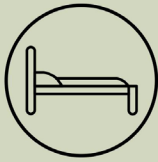
APPENDIX 2. ADAPTED HOUSING CONTINUUM

Figure 33. Adapted housing continuum

new models provide equitable dignified opportunities to include a broader spectrum of housing types that meet emergency housing needs.

HOUSING CONTINUUM





CONGREGATE/NON-CONGREGATE SHELTER

Congregate Shelter is a type of housing that provides communal shelter and amenities. PEH separated by gender and age with Usually managed by a service provider and/or organization. Most often these programs provide some level of supportive services and/or housing. Congregate shelters may include a wall or partition, but typically do not provide a significant amount of privacy. Due to covid, some shelters have moved to non-congregate shelter models that are single night stays; however, many argue that the cost of investing in a non-congregate shelter is just as expensive as Permanent Supportive Housing and has proven to be less successful in providing permanent housing solutions. **Medium to High Barrier**



9 mo- 4 yrs



one night at a time; 6-24 mos



\$\$\$



depends on organization



up to 30% AMI



TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

A broad term in Housing to mean the programmatic elements of wraparound supportive services, and length of time in the residence more than the actual housing type. Most housing types could be labeled as "transitional" in nature if a person in a specific targeted demographic agrees to the terms of that specific program, if they include some component of supportive services, housing navigation, and do not include a lease and residency is limited to to 24 months. Many shelters, drug/alcohol treatment programs, sober living, or domestic violence programs fall within this category. Because it is a programmatic element, federal and state funding for these types of models can be a challenge and likely will come through programs like medicaid, drug and alcohol resource funding, and counseling services.



PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (PSH)

Permanent housing which is long-term leasing, rental assistance, WITH supportive services to vulnerable populations and people experiencing chronic homelessness. These are service-oriented programs designed to support individuals or families who may not be successful without services. **Low Barrier**



2-4 years



permanent



\$\$\$



Robust; Wrap-around



up to 30% AMI



SUBSIDIZED AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable Housing is typically defined as housing that is only affordable with some subsidies for income-qualified residents. Traditionally, no services are provided, but some programs may offer some type of support. **Medium Barrier**



2-4 years



permanent



\$\$\$



None to Light Services



30-60% AMI Rental
50-100% AMI Ownership



Time for Installation



Resident Length of Stay



Cost



Transitional/Support Services



Household AMI

As of January 2024, the City of Grand Junction began operationalizing an adapted housing continuum to support their efforts to fill key housing and shelter gaps.

APPENDIX 3. REVIEW OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES ON COST SAVINGS AND HOUSELESSNESS INTERVENTIONS

There is a wide range of potential interventions and solutions to attempt to solve the challenge of addressing and supporting the unhoused population across the United States. With such a wide range of interventions, understanding which ones are most effective and most cost efficient is important so that regulatory bodies can most efficiently allocate resources and funding. Interventions may take place across multiple stages of houselessness and may range from services to prevent vulnerable populations from becoming unhoused to emergency shelters or disaster relief services to help those currently unhoused have a safe place to stay or survive extreme weather events.

This section intends to review potential cost savings and effectiveness by intervention or prevention service, based on prior peer reviewed research or evidence from interventions or services provided in other areas of the United States. Estimates are wide ranging and highly dependent on context, as each are targeted specifically at certain populations or only consider one intervention. While cost savings or effectiveness may differ in Grand Junction from the reviews presented below, the previous literature demonstrates a comprehensive evidence base and sense of what types of costs and benefits are associated with interventions and responses to houselessness.

Houseless prevention and financial assistance

One potential intervention for addressing houselessness is through prevention and financial assistance for vulnerable individuals prior to becoming houseless. With rising costs of living and tenants struggling to keep up with these costs, eviction and the potential to enter homelessness is a real threat to people. Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data and current rental indices in Grand Junction, 78% of the population works in occupations whose average annual wages are above a 30% rent-to-income ratio, likely making houselessness a real threat for a large portion of this population. Preventing members of this population from possible houselessness would not only be helpful for this population but would also prevent the burden on the current houselessness system and emergency services from increasing.

While prevention programs have great potential, their effectiveness has only recently begun to be studied in academic literature. Phillips and Sullivan²⁸ provide the first evidence from a randomized control trial that analyzes the impact of financial assistance to prevent houselessness, where families at high risk of becoming unhoused were offered temporary financial assistance for rent and costs of living at an average of \$2,000 per family assigned to the treatment group. They find that the assistance significantly reduces houselessness and is also a cost-effective intervention. These types of interventions are likely to be particularly useful for people in extreme poverty or those currently experiencing doubled-up houselessness. A National Alliance to End Homelessness Report in 2011 reported that the odds of becoming unhoused for those at or below the poverty line is 1 in 25 and for those doubled-up is 1 in 10, which are both substantially greater than for the general population, which has 1 in 200 odds of becoming unhoused.

The numbers on prevention

- People offered emergency financial assistance were 81 percent less likely to become unhoused within six months of enrollment, and 73 percent less likely to become unhoused within 12 months of enrollment.²⁹

²⁸ (Phillips & Sullivan, 2023)

²⁹ (Phillips & Sullivan, 2023)

- It is estimated that communities get \$2.47 back in benefits per net dollar spent on emergency financial assistance.³⁰
- The emergency financial assistance program has \$1,898 of direct benefits to recipients and \$2,605 of benefits to non-recipients.³¹ Specific benefits include an estimated:
 - \$316 per person savings in utilization of public services such as health and justice systems.
 - Decreased costs of eviction such as loss of possessions, difficulty finding new housing, and disruptions to children (if present).
 - \$219 in benefits to landlords of avoiding evictions and damages.
 - Indirect savings to the public through reduction in violent crime. \$2,386 in benefits to victims of crime.

Housing first interventions and transitional/supported housing

Housing first, or the idea that having stable housing is necessary before people experiencing houselessness can find work and transition back into the community, is one of the most studied interventions in terms of cost effectiveness for houselessness interventions. Housing first is also largely related to, or could be interchangeably used with, transitional and/or supported housing, which provides housing to people experiencing houselessness along with case management and support in receiving services. Several studies that look at housing first or transitional housing interventions are observational randomized control trials, which allows for comparison of groups who received the housing first treatment and groups that received normal treatment. These studies likely offer the most reliable results of cost effectiveness, as they are based on real comparisons and observations of new interventions compared to baseline or normal treatment. A potential shortfall of these studies is that they focus on specific populations and interventions, such as veterans with mental health disorders, so the effectiveness and effects of the interventions may somewhat differ if they were to be applied to other populations.

Rosenheck et al.³² analyzed the cost effectiveness of HUD-VA supported housing with section 8 vouchers and intensive case management for homeless veterans with mental health disorders, compared to baseline treatments of standard VA care and/or case management only. They find that, from a cost perspective alone, the cost of the HUD-VA supported housing is slightly higher than standard care, but that there are benefits that accrue through superior outcomes such as an increase in the number of days housed for veterans experiencing houselessness and indirect effects to society. Latimer et al.³³ conducted a similar study, looking at an adult population with mental illness experiencing houselessness, and the cost effectiveness of housing first with intensive case management compared to treatment as usual. Results were similar to Rosenheck et al.³⁴ in that the housing first intervention was marginally more costly but that benefits accrued to individuals and society. Specifically, they found that there were meaningful cost offsets observed for emergency shelters, substance use treatment, supportive housing, and EMS services.

Basu et al.³⁵ conducted a comparative cost analysis of a housing and case management program for chronically ill adults experiencing houselessness relative to usual care, utilizing a two-arm randomized control trial with patients at a public hospital and a private, non-profit hospital. In this population,

³⁰ (Phillips & Sullivan, 2023)

³¹ (Phillips & Sullivan, 2023)

³² Rosenheck et al., 2003.

³³ (Latimer et al., 2019)

³⁴ (Rosenheck et al., 2003)

³⁵ (Basu et al., 2012)

unlike Rosenheck et al.³⁶ and Latimer et al.,³⁷ they found that the housing and case management group demonstrated substantial cost savings relative to normal care, primarily through decreases in hospitalizations, emergency services, and legal services that substantially offset the increase in housing, case management, and outpatient costs. Overall, there are some discrepancies across the literature for housing first when looking strictly at cost effectiveness or cost savings, as Ly and Latimer³⁸ find in a review of literature on housing first's impact on costs and associated cost offsets. They reviewed several published as well as 22 unpublished studies with variation in results and monetary cost savings across the literature base. While there is some level of uncertainty on cost savings, there are clear cost offsets in specific areas such as utilization of emergency services, legal and justice system burden, and other related costs, with clear benefits to participants and therefore PEH. They conclude that, overall, housing first initiatives represent a more efficient allocation of resources than traditional services, despite the variation in cost.

The numbers and key information on housing first and supported housing

■ Potential cost offsets, or mean reductions in costs attributable to the housing first intervention, come through a variety of mechanisms:

- ☐ Emergency shelters: -\$2,627³⁹
- ☐ Substance use treatment: -\$1,148⁴⁰
- ☐ Supportive housing: -\$1,861⁴¹
- ☐ Ambulatory visits/EMS: -\$2,375,⁴² -\$704⁴³
- ☐ Hospitalization: -\$6,786⁴⁴
- ☐ Legal services: -\$1,051⁴⁵

■ Incremental Cost Efficiency Ratios (ICER) are variable, with some studies showing slightly higher marginal costs and some showing lower marginal costs. These are likely to vary substantially depending on the study context and the total costs of the housing first intervention within the setting:

- ☐ ICER⁴⁶: \$45, Intervention is slightly more costly.
- ☐ ICER⁴⁷: \$56.08, Intervention is slightly more costly.
- ☐ ICER⁴⁸: -\$6,307, Intervention is less costly. This is primarily driven by changes in hospitalization costs.
- ☐ Benefits vary depending on cost-effectiveness acceptability curves, which measure how

³⁶ (Rosenheck et al., 2003)

³⁷ (Latimer et al., 2019)

³⁸ (Ly & Latimer, 2015)

³⁹ (Latimer et al., 2019)

⁴⁰ (Latimer et al., 2019)

⁴¹ (Latimer et al., 2019)

⁴² (Latimer et al., 2019)

⁴³ (Basu et al., 2012)

⁴⁴ (Basu et al., 2012)

⁴⁵ (Basu et al., 2012)

⁴⁶ (Rosenheck et al., 2003)

⁴⁷ (Latimer et al., 2019)

⁴⁸ (Basu et al., 2012)

much society values an additional day of housing. If benefits are valued at \$50, the probability of benefits outweighing costs is 56%. If benefits are valued at \$100, the probability of benefits outweighing costs is 92%.

■ Housing first or Supported Housing is beneficial for participants:

- At three years follow up, individuals who received the full supported housing treatment had 16% more days housed than a group that received only case management, and 25% more days housed than the group that received baseline care.⁴⁹
- Days of stable housing were higher by 140 days for the housing first treatment group.⁵⁰
- There is some uncertainty whether housing first, strictly from a cost standpoint, fully offset costs. However, there is a benefit to participants, and the interventions represent a more efficient allocation of resources compared to traditional services.

Emergency housing, shelters, and encampments

These types of interventions are generally related to the unsheltered homeless population, who may be living in unsuitable conditions, outside, or in encampments. From the cost perspective, the relationship between the public health costs of encampments and the costs of shelters and emergency housing services is complex. Additionally, because of this complexity, comparisons and understanding of the costs, benefits, and tradeoffs to permanent housing initiatives such as housing first is not well understood or clear. Costs are highly influenced by city or government response to unsheltered homeless persons, funding and support for shelters, number of beds available, and other related costs such as outreach and staffing, public services to clean or clear encampments, and emergency services that respond to emergencies related to unsheltered homelessness.

One solution that is frequently implemented to supplement shelters and somewhat manage unsanctioned camping is to designate publicly sanctioned encampments or provide other alternatives such as temporary tiny homes or safe parking. However, the evidence base suggests that these are not necessarily cost saving, as there are additional costs such as staffing and oversight, having to operate outdoors and in designated perimeters, and potentially dealing with additional substance use issues. The relationship between shelters and people's choice to enter a shelter rather than encampments is also complex, as shelters have stricter rules and limitations. It is noted in an Alternative Shelter Analysis report by EcoNW (2023) that people often avoid shelters due to potential separation from family, timing that does not align with schedules, concerns about security of personal belongings, concerns about exposure to germs and disease, and sobriety requirements at many shelters.

Overall, prior research and evidence suggest that there are no cost savings between shelter beds and sanctioned campsites, safe parking, or other similar alternative measures. While providing these sanctioned alternatives may provide support for shelters and address some of the shortcomings of shelters, there is no evidence that providing these additional short term shelters impact inflow or outflow to homelessness. Experts suggest that shelters and sanctioned camping should not be viewed as a permanent solution alone, as individuals may become reliant on these supports without receiving the necessary interventions to reduce houselessness, therefore leading to high costs over time (EcoNW, 2023).

The numbers on shelters and encampments:

- The best estimate for cost per bed at a bed-only shelter facility for a single adult, which is the most common type of facility is: \$14,064⁵¹
- Costs of a bed can be highly variable depending on bed type and other services provided at a shelter facility:

⁴⁹ (Rosenheck et al., 2003)

⁵⁰ (Latimer et al., 2019)

⁵¹ (Culhane & An, 2022)

Table 24. Estimated annual revenue per bed/unity, temporary and permanent housing shelters⁵²

Population		Temporary (\$)	Permanent (\$)
Family	Mode	17,742	25,390
	Median	22,750	38,523
	Mean	26,250	52,405
Adult	Mode	14,064	18,809
	Median	19,787	24,198
	Mean	25,806	28,772
Youth	Mode	34,492	-
	Median	39,432	-
	Mean	43,519	-
Total	Mode	16,042	18,462
	Median	23,030	25,863
	Mean	27,589	32,511

- Costs of alternative shelters such as sanctioned campsites, safe parking, and tiny homes are highly variable, but comparable on a per capita basis to the costs per bed at shelters (EcoNW, 2023). Annual operating costs range from roughly \$10k-\$75k per bed per year, with most between \$20k-\$50k per bed.

Table 25. Cost of alternative housing projects⁵³

Project type	Metro area	Project name	Units/capacity	Upfront/capital	Capital per capita	Annual operations	Annual operations per capita
Sanctioned campsite	Denver	Safe Outdoor Spaces (4 sites)	220	\$700,000	\$3,182	\$4,169,871	\$18,954
Sanctioned campsite	Los Angeles	Pilot Safe Sleep Village	90	\$230,577	\$ 2,562	\$1,250,300	\$32,959
Sanctioned campsite	San Francisco	Sleep Villages 2022-2023	63	\$2,000,000	\$31,746	\$4,100,000	\$74,545
Safe parking & sanctioned campsite	Sacramento	WX-SafeGround	185	-	-	\$3,048,000	\$16,476
Safe parking & sanctioned campsite	Sacramento	Miller Park	110	-	-	\$3,287,452	\$29,886
Safe parking	Sacramento	South Front Dr. Safe Parking	50	-	-	\$1,185,000	\$23,700
Safe parking	Sacramento	Roseville Road RT Station	50	\$500,000	\$10,000	\$2,200,000	\$44,000

⁵² (Culhane & An, 2022)

⁵³ (ECONorthwest, 2023)

Project type	Metro area	Project name	Units/ capacity	Upfront/ capital	Capital per capita	Annual operations	Annual operations per capita
Safe parking	Sacramento	Coflax Yard	30	\$600,000	\$20,000	\$2,200,000	\$61,125
Safe parking	San Francisco	Bayview VTC Safe Parking	100	\$3,000,000	\$30,000	\$3,500,000	\$35,000
Safe parking	Portland	Sunderland RV Safe Park (New)	55	\$200,000	\$3,636	-	-
Tiny homes	Portland	Agape Village	15	\$82,500	\$5,500	\$116,000	\$7,733
Tiny homes	Denver	Beloved Community Village	24	\$145,000	\$6,042	\$204,000	\$8,500
Tiny homes	Denver	Women's Welcome Village	14	\$210,000	\$ 5,000	\$128,800	\$9,200
Tiny homes	Missoula	Temporary Safe Outdoor Space (TSOS)	30	\$1,480,000	\$49,333	\$408,000	\$13,600
Tiny homes	Los Angeles	Arroyo Seco - Hyland Park	224	\$7,327,376	\$32,712	\$4,496,800	\$20,075
Tiny homes	Los Angeles	Saticoy + Whitsett West	150	\$9,007,000	\$60,047	\$2,930,950	\$20,075
Tiny homes	Los Angeles	Eagle Rock	93	\$3,832,137	\$41,206	\$1,866,975	\$20,075
Tiny homes	Los Angeles	Tarzana Sun-flower Cabin Community	150	\$5,332,220	\$35,548	\$3,011,250	\$20,075
Tiny homes	Portland	Menlo Park Safe Rest Village	60	\$400,750	\$6,679	\$2,430,000	\$40,500
Tiny homes	Portland	Queer Affinity Village	35	\$500,000	\$14,286	\$3,000,000	\$41,096
Tiny homes	Portland	BIPOC Village	38	-	-	-	-
Tiny homes	Portland	Multnomah Safe Rest Village	30	\$452,776	\$15,093	\$1,930,000	\$64,333
Tiny homes	Sacramento	Emergency Bridge Housing - Grove	24	-	-	\$3,195,744	\$66,578
Tiny homes	San Francisco	33 Gough Street Tiny Cabin Village	70	\$2,000,000	\$28,571	\$5,460,000	\$78,000
Tiny homes	San Francisco	16th and Mission St Cabins (New)	70	\$7,000,000	\$100,000	-	-
Tiny homes	Austin	Esperanza Community 2022/23 (New)	200	\$7,070,035	\$35,350	-	-

- Costs of responding to encampments are highly variable across cities and dependent on the way in which each city responds to encampments. The below figures demonstrate the cost per unsheltered homeless person as well as a detailed breakout of costs across four cities included in the study.⁵⁴

Table 26. Cost of encampment response per number of unsheltered homeless population⁵⁵

	Total spending on encampment activities, 2019	Unsheltered population, 2019	Cost per unsheltered person, 2019
Chicago	\$ 3,572,000	1,260	\$ 2,835
Houston	\$ 3,393,000	1,614	\$ 2,108
Tacoma	\$ 3,905,000	629	\$ 6,208
San Jose	\$ 8,557,000	1,922	\$ 1,080

Table 27. Cost of encampment response by type of activity⁵⁶

	Chicago	Houston	San Jose	Tacoma
Outreach (total)	\$ 3,082,000	\$ 15,460,000	\$ 870,000	\$ 1,056,000
Outreach and housing navigation	\$ 2,110,000	\$ 834,000	\$ 800,000	\$ 168,000
Homeless outreach teams	\$ 9,310,000	\$ 630,000	-	\$ 887,000
Substance use disorder programs	-	\$ 27,000	-	-
Medical assistance	\$ 33,000	\$ 52,000	\$ 5,300	-
Financial assistance	\$ 7,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 17,000	\$ 1,000
Encampment clearance	\$ 14,000	\$ 887,000	\$ 4,910,000	\$ 144,000
Encampment prevention	-	-	\$ 1,495,000	\$ 239,000
Shelter	\$ 297,000	-	-	\$ 2,347,000
Dedicated permanent supportive housing	-	\$ 782,000	-	-
Other	\$ 53,000	\$ 178,000	\$ 1,281,000	\$ 65,000
Total	\$ 3,572,000	\$ 3,393,000	\$ 8,557,000	\$ 3,905,000

Hygiene and health interventions and services

While hygiene, health, and crisis interventions are not solutions to houselessness, they are necessary services to maintain public health standards and tools to provide basic living needs to those experiencing houselessness, particularly unsheltered houselessness. These services are highly connected to the shelter and housing tools referenced in the above section, as health and hygiene services are often associated with encampments. Additionally, reductions in the houseless populations may lead to declines in costs for these services due to a reduction in utilization.

⁵⁴ (Dunton et al., 2020)

⁵⁵ (Dunton et al., 2020)

⁵⁶ (Dunton et al., 2020)

The numbers and costs of hygiene and health services

All costs are from a Portland Hygiene, Storage, and Waste Management study for the unsheltered community.⁵⁷ Costs may be lower for Grand Junction, which is a smaller community.

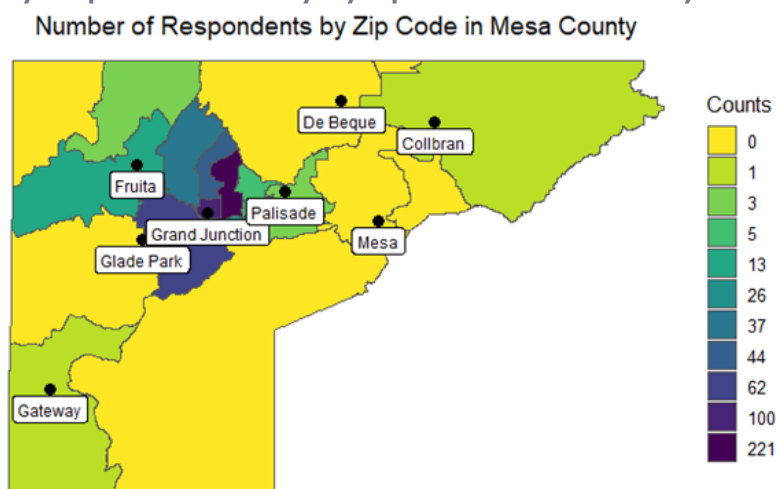
- Port-a-potties:
 - ☐ \$700/unit in replacement costs
 - ☐ \$35,000/month for a maintenance contract to service all units (Portland, OR)
- Standalone public restrooms:
 - ☐ \$100,000/unit cost
 - ☐ \$100,000 in installation costs
 - ☐ \$15,000/year in utilities and maintenance costs
- Handwashing stations:
 - ☐ \$60/unit plus two hours set up and two hours of maintenance/week
- Mobile shower services:
 - ☐ Mobile shower trucks are sometimes paired with toilets and offer flexibility in delivering services
 - ☐ \$400,000/truck with yearly maintenance of \$300,000
 - ☐ Potentially cheaper options:
 - Mobile trailer at \$70,000
 - Modified bus or truck at \$150,000
- RV waste services:
 - ☐ Services to provide mobile RV waste pump outs and bagged trash collection
 - ☐ Contract at \$238,000/year

⁵⁷ (Green et al., 2022)

APPENDIX 4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM SURVEY OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The community survey was circulated through advertisements on social media which specifically targeted Grand Junction and Mesa County from July 7 through July 31, 2023. There were 677 completed survey responses included in the final analysis. A response was excluded if it was less than 30% complete, less than three minutes was spent on the survey, and if they did not currently reside in Grand Junction. Figure 33 presents the geographic distribution of respondents. Zip codes in yellow did not include any respondents.

Figure 34. Survey respondent density by zip code: Mesa County



Survey participant ages were skewed older (i.e., only 7.24% respondents between the ages of 20-29 years), and the survey does not fully capture young adult or youth perspectives on unhoused experiences in Grand Junction. Additionally, a larger number of people identifying as women responded to the survey (i.e., 61% of respondents identified as women) than the proportion of the population in the county. Respondents tended to be long-term residents of the county, with 443 respondents reporting that they have lived in the county for more than ten years.

Thirteen percent of respondents stated that they had been personally unhoused. Of those individuals, 53% had previously been unhoused in GJ and just under 17% are currently unhoused in GJ. Further, most of the individuals who were either currently or previously unhoused in GJ indicated that they had lived in the area for greater than one year, which is contrary to the often-cited belief that people who are unhoused are not “from” where they live. These beliefs can stem from a variety of factors, including misunderstandings, stereotypes, and limited exposure to the realities of houselessness. Houselessness that is more visible, such as people sleeping on the streets or in public places, might give the impression that homeless individuals are not connected to the local community. Stigma and stereotypes about houselessness frequently portray people who are experiencing houselessness as “outsiders” or “others,” and this perception can lead to the misconception that people who are unhoused must be from somewhere else. While the incidence of currently unhoused respondents was relatively low ($n = 24$), 41% indicated that they have lived in Grand Junction for over 20 years, and this trend was the same for those who were previously unhoused in the area, with 52% reporting that they lived in Grand Junction for more than 20 years. Only 5% of people who are currently or previously unhoused in Grand Junction reported being in the area for less than one year.

There was some variation in the housing status of respondents, as displayed in Figure 34, where respondents were asked to reflect on both the quality of their current housing situation as well as their level of worry or concern about the stability of their current housing status.

Figure 35. Community survey: Current housing situation and worried about housing

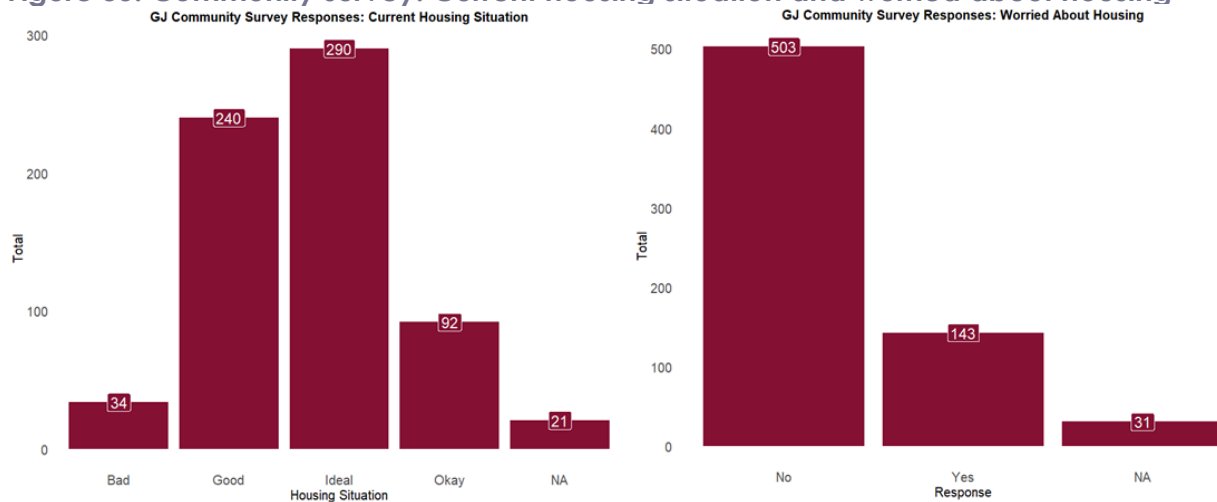


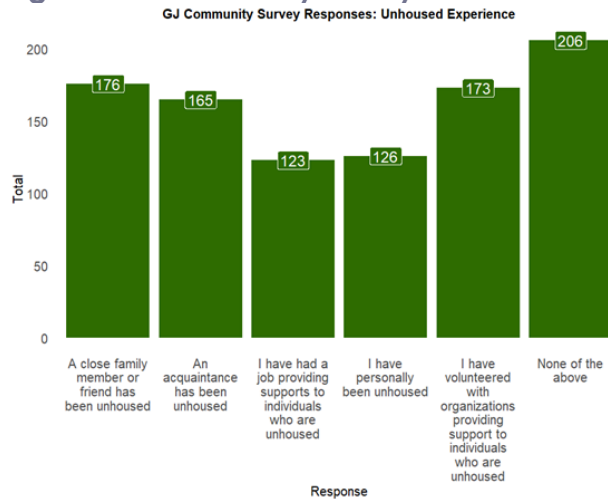
Table 28. Community survey: Reason for housing worry

Reason for housing worry	Total	%
Rent went up	36	5.32
Basic costs of living went up	36	5.32
Household income went down	31	4.58
Other	17	2.51
Household bills went up	11	1.62
Current housing situation is/was temporary	9	1.33
Landlord pursuing eviction or choosing not to renew lease	3	0.44

Note: Respondents could select more than one option. Other write in responses included: All the above, decision making from city and county officials, housing market availability and affordability, low wages, poverty, and other financial concerns

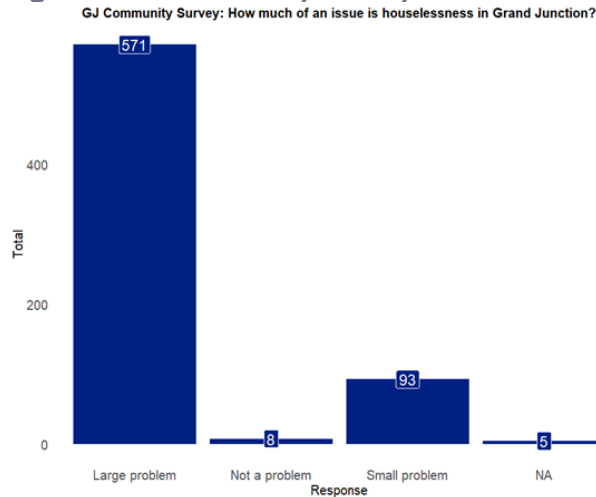
There was also a broad set of personal experiences among respondents with those who are unhoused, ranging from volunteering to provide support to personally being unhoused at some point in their lifetime. These varied experiences suggest that the respondents were at least partially knowledgeable about the experience of being unhoused in the community, and that this informed their perspectives on questions about service needs and gaps in the community. Just over 9% of respondents had personal experiences with using housing-related services in Grand Junction, with the most common being supportive services such as free meals or childcare, Housing Choice or Section 8 voucher, and rental assistance or eviction prevention.

Figure 36. Community survey: Unhoused experience



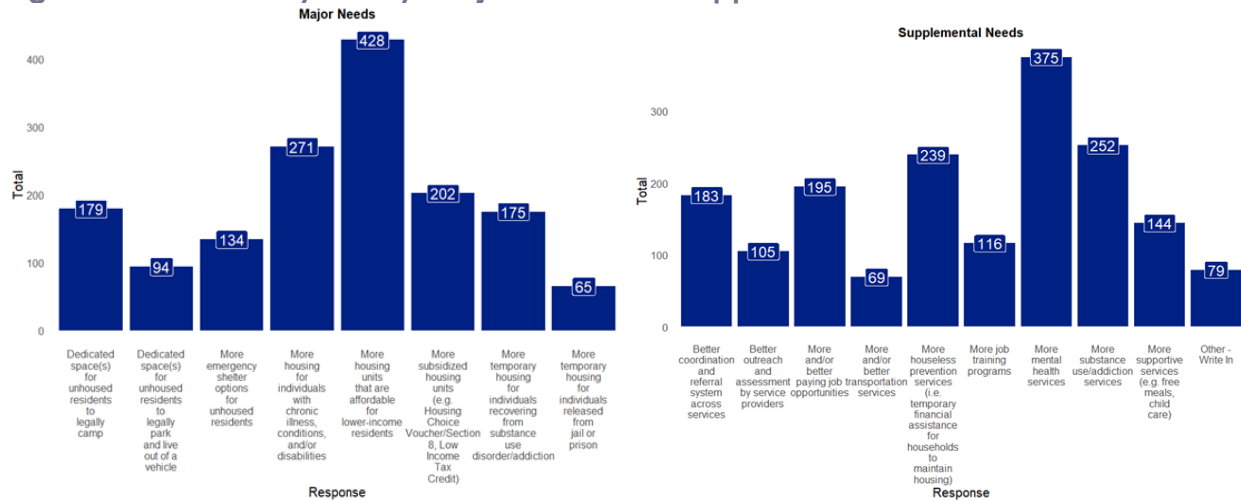
Survey respondents overwhelmingly viewed houselessness as a problem in the community, with 84% indicating that they viewed it as a large problem.

Figure 37. Community survey: How much of an issue is houselessness in Grand Junction?



Survey respondents were asked to select (from a set of housing interventions across the housing continuum) those services that had the highest need. Figure 37 displays how they ranked service needs, with affordable housing units for low-income residents being the most commonly identified need.

Figure 38. Community survey: Major needs and supplemental needs



In addition to housing types, survey respondents were asked to identify supplemental supports that can aid those who are unhoused or function as a preventative measure against an individual or family becoming unhoused. When asked about supplemental support, residents focused on the need for mental health services and substance use treatment services.

Figure 39. Community survey: Who should be responsible for emergency shelter and long term housing for unhoused residents?

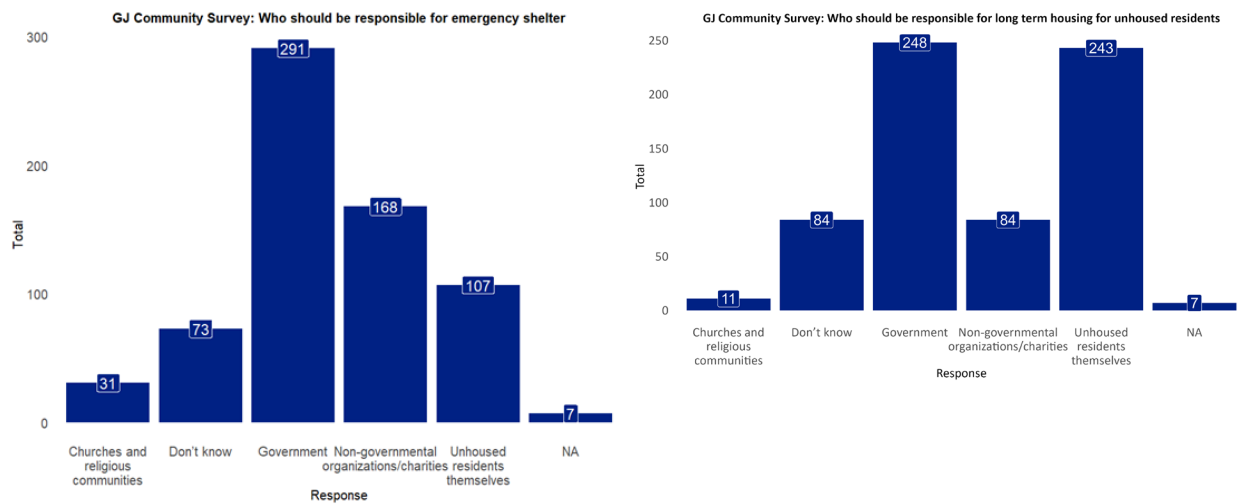


Figure 40. Community survey: Opinion on government spending to assist unhoused residents

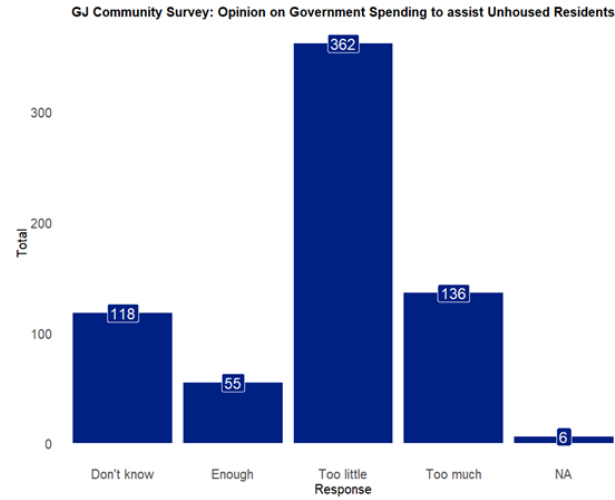
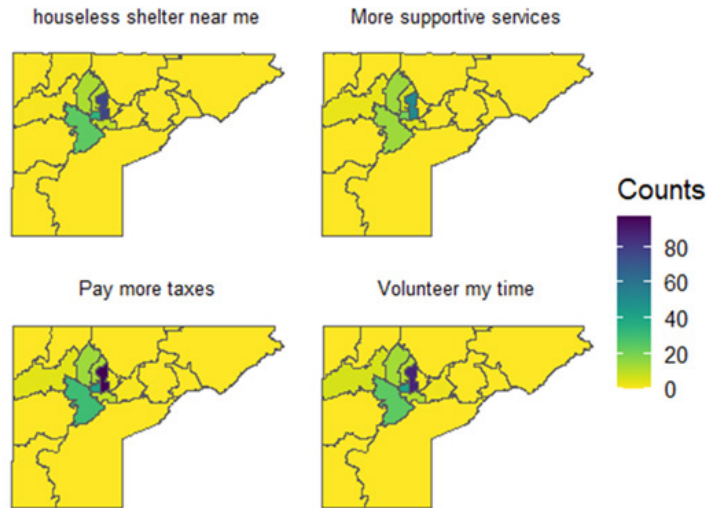


Figure 41. Community survey: Maps of support for housing-related services
Which Housing-Related Services Would You Be Willing To Support?



APPENDIX 5. SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Table 29. Risk factors by census tract

Risk characteristics – Areas at highest risk of houselessness		
Tract Area	Risk ranking	Characteristics and risk drivers
Central Grand Junction	1	High poverty rate, high percentage of people with a disability, low number of housing units per capita. Relatively high averages across all risk indicators.
Central Grand Junction	2	High percentage of people receiving public assistance, large non-White population, high poverty rate, high percentage of people with a disability
Central Grand Junction	3	Highest poverty rate of any census tract in Mesa County, large portion of people who cannot afford rent, relatively high percentage of people with a disability
Fruita Area	4	Highest rent-to-income ratio of any census tract in county, relatively large non-White population
Southeast Grand Junction — Riverside	5	Tied for highest rent-to-income ratio of any census tract in county, high median rent, relatively high unemployment rate

Notes: The risk characteristics and drivers are based off the relative indicator rankings for the above census tracts. The indicators that appear to be driving the overall risk ranking are described, however, the overall risk ranking is driven by the average across all of the indicators.

Table 30. Rent-to-income ratio by occupation in Grand Junction: 2016-2021

Rent-to-income ratios by occupation in Grand Junction – 2016 to 2021				
Occupation	2016		2021	
	% of total employment	Rent-to-income ratio	% of total employment	Rent-to-income ratio
Food preparation and serving related occupations	10.77	50.31	10.52	50.91
Healthcare support occupations	3.44	37.44	4.63	47.69
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	2.83	38.61	3.12	47.12
Personal care and service occupations	2.83	46.21	1.74	45.73
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.07	34.90	0.14	45.43
Transportation and material moving occupations	6.12	30.60	7.38	42.29
Production occupations	3.87	30.59	4.10	40.67
Office and administrative support occupations	15.81	32.83	12.80	39.95
Sales and related occupations	12.59	28.38	11.42	36.98
Educational instruction and library occupations			5.84	35.55
Community and social service occupations	2.20	25.95	2.00	33.60
Construction and extraction occupations	6.37	23.97	6.74	33.14
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4.96	24.48	4.83	32.28
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	1.19	30.55	0.93	31.86
Protective service occupations	2.23	24.29	2.08	31.05
Architecture and engineering occupations	1.06	15.07	1.37	23.59
Business and financial operations occupations	4.17	17.38	5.37	23.16
Life, physical, and social science occupations	0.92	17.37	1.06	22.63
Computer and mathematical occupations	0.99	15.18	1.18	20.25
Legal occupations	0.66	16.32	0.65	18.13
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	7.99	13.79	8.11	16.04
Management occupations	3.36	11.52	3.99	14.87
All occupations	100.00	25.35	100.00	31.31

Source: Zillow and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table 31. Example assessment and prioritization tools

Tool	Developer	Details	Supporting literature; validity/reliability
Alliance Coordinated Assessment Tool Set	National Alliance to End Homelessness	24 questions and Vulnerability index	No formal evaluations or psychometric properties reported.
DESC – Vulnerability Assessment Tool	Downtown Emergency Service Center – Seattle	10 questions	Good inter-item, inter-rater, and test-retest reliability. Demonstrated good convergent and concurrent validity. ⁵⁸
Rehousing, Triage, and Assessment Survey	Calgary Homeless Foundation	45 questions	No formal evaluations or psychometric properties reported.
Homelessness Asset and Risk Screening Tool (Hart)	University Of Calgary, Calgary Homeless Foundation	21 questions; sub questions for youth, women, older adults, and indigenous populations	Good content and construct validity, but no reliability analyses reported. ⁵⁹
VI-SPDAT (version 3)	Community Solutions	27 questions	The VI-SPDAT 3 has no formal evaluation. The VI-SPDAT 2 shows poor test-retest and inter-rater reliability. ⁶⁰ The VI-SPDAT 3 is based on version 2. At least three studies identified unintended racial disparities in survey outcomes. ⁶¹
Matching for Appropriate Placement	Pathways MISI and Montana Continuum of Care Coalition	22 questions	No formal evaluations or psychometric properties were reported.
Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix	Arizona	18 questions	Reported low inter-item reliability, good internal consistency, and good convergent validity ⁶²

⁵⁸ (Ginzler and Monroe-DeVita, 2010)

⁵⁹ (Tutty et al., 2012)

⁶⁰ (Brown et al., 2018)

⁶¹ (Cronley, C., 2020); (King, 2018); (Wilkey et al., 2019)

⁶² (Cummings, 2018)

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Grand Junction City Council

Workshop Session

Item #1.d.

Meeting Date: June 30, 2025
Presented By: Tamra Allen, Community Development Director
Department: Community Development
Submitted By: Tamra Allen, Community Development Director

Information

SUBJECT:

Housing Affordability/Attainability Code Task Force

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City has received several recent inquiries from members of the Housing and Building Association of Western Colorado to convene a task force focused on “meaningful” reforms within the City’s policies and procedures to make housing more attainable. Staff is supportive of this concept and offers the following as a series of recommendations as to the formation and purpose of a potential task force.

BACKGROUND OR DETAILED INFORMATION:

The City has received several recent inquiries from members of the Housing and Building Association of Western Colorado to convene a task force focused on “meaningful” reforms within the City’s policies and procedures to make housing more attainable. Staff are supportive of this concept and offer the following as a series of recommendations as to the formation and purpose of a potential task force, as follows:

The city has received several recent inquiries from members of the Housing and Building Association of Western Colorado to convene a task force focused on “meaningful” reforms within the city’s policies and procedures to make housing more attainable. Staff is supportive of this concept and offer the following as a series of recommendations as to the formation and purpose of a potential task force, as follows:

1. The scope of the effort should be clear and focused. The task force should be convened specifically for the purpose of reducing the regulatory cost burden directly impacting the affordability of new housing. Since the city does not administer the Building Code, the scope of work should be limited to Title 21 (Zoning and Development Code) and Title 29 (Transportation and Engineering Design Standards), as these are the two areas of the Municipal Code that most significantly regulate the formation of new lots and sites on which housing is built.

2. The task force should serve for a discrete period of time to ensure a high degree of focus and a sense of urgency. We recommend a 6-to-9-month timeframe for issue identification and solution-finding is appropriate.

3. It should be clear that staff's role in the task force is to be in a supportive role. Staff will assist with administrative tasks and logistics, while the task force will be tasked with issue and solution identification. Staff will be available to contribute to the discussion, provide information and context, as may be needed. Should the task force's work result in proposed amendments to the municipal code, staff's role will also include the evaluation of the proposed code text changes against the city's adopted plans and policies – as required by the criteria within the code. Staff, as normal, would express their professional opinion about any proposed changes in the context of a staff report and/or presentation to the planning commission and city council. The committee's recommendations would also clearly be shared with Planning Commission and City Council. Articulating the roles of the committee and staff is an important step prior to the start of the committee to properly manage expectations.

4. A functional task force size for this type of committee typically ranges between 10 and 15 members. This size allows for group members to actively participate in discussion and dialogue. The membership of the task force should be comprised of people familiar with the development of subdivisions and site planning related to multi-family projects within the city. Further, it should be comprised of members able to commit to attending all (or nearly all) meetings. Prior code work the city has led, underscores the necessity of attendance, as members that miss meetings either do not get to contribute to the discussion or slow progress by the committee needing to revisit numerous provisions. Staff have included a list of professions that should be considered to participate in this task force, as shown in the table below:

No. of Members	Areas of Representation
2	City Council members
2	Planning Commission members
3	Developers who build single-unit, duplex, and townhome lots intended for attainable housing
3	Developers who develop the site and contract for and/or build multi-family units
2	Civil engineers specializing in developing site plans and civil plans for subdivisions or site plans
2	Design specialists (eg. traffic engineer, landscape architects) who work on development entitlements

5. The Council should provide a list of expected outcomes for the task force to ensure understanding of how success/completion will be defined. This should include itemizing the changes in costs related to the code revisions that directly impact housing affordability. An additional outcome may also be to observe and track the decrease in new home prices if/when regulatory costs are removed and/or lessened. It may also be helpful to create an understanding of how the city's code requirements compare to those of other communities' codes.

For additional background, the City convened a Code Committee in 2022 to assist in the most recent code updating process. There were 17 members, of whom 10 were directly related to the housing development industry (member roster attached). The City contracted with a consultant to facilitate the process and provide recommended revisions to the Code. The purpose of the code updating process was to 1) better reflect the goals and policies described in the 2020 One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan, especially those Key Principles related to Responsible and Managed Growth and Strong Neighborhoods and Housing Choices, 2) to achieve a higher level of efficiency, consistency, and simplicity, and 3) to remove barriers for affordable housing, consistent with those identified in the City's recently adopted Housing Strategies.

The process to update the code took 21 months. The initial scope of time was approximately one year, but as the revised draft approached adoption, members of the Code Committee requested additional time. Completion of the revised draft took an additional 9 months. During this time the code committee met 30 times for roughly 1.5 to 2 hours each, the Planning Commission held 29 workshops, and the Council held 12 workshops, not including one-on-one meetings. The meeting information is attached. Along with an updated Code, at the conclusion of the process, a table was produced by the remaining active members of the Committee that indicated the impact the code changes had on costs for development, including an increase in cost, a reduction of costs, and a neutral cost impact. This table has been attached for reference.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Discussion and direction.

Attachments

1. Exhibit 7 - Impact of Code Changes
2. Exhibit 1 - Code Committee Roster
3. Meetings on Code Update

Grand Junction 2023 Z&DC Update: Impact of Code Changes
Updated October 2023

Section	Title/Description	Impact on Future Development	Impact on Construction Costs	Comments
21.01	General Provisions			
	Revised transitional provisions to provide greater specificity about multiple approval projects	Cost/Time Decrease	No Impact	
21.02	Administration and Procedures			
	Expanded applicability and permitted scope of administrative adjustments	Cost/Time Decrease	Cost Decrease	
	Updated and clarified rezoning review criteria	Cost/Time Decrease	No Impact	
	Updated comprehensive plan amendment criteria	No Impact	No Impact	
	Adjusted applicability of PD lapsing provision	Cost/Time Decrease	No Impact	
21.03	Zone Districts and Dimensional Standards			
	Expanded list of permitted setback and height exceptions for clarity and to reduce adjustment requests	Cost/Time Decrease	No Impact	
	Retired R-E, R-1, and R-2 zone districts	No Impact	No impact	
	Reduced residential front and street side setbacks in RL-4 and higher to 15 feet	Expanded development	No Impact/Cost Decrease	
	RM-5 and up: Revised dimensional standards to specifically allow attached units	Expanded development	Cost Decrease	
	RM-5: Increased maximum lot coverage	Expanded development	Cost Decrease	
	RM-12 and up: Reduced minimum lot area for attached DUs, reduced per unit lot width, raised max height	Expanded development	Cost Decrease	
	Revised most commercial zone districts to mixed-use by adding residential uses, used most permissive dimensions	Expanded development	No impact	
	Added new Parks and Open Space district	No Impact	Cost Increase	May have been interpreted as additional dedication requirement in cost survey
	Added new Public, Civic, and Institutional Campus district	Expanded development	No Impact	
21.04	Use Standards			
	Updated use table to specify full range of housing types, allowed more types in more districts	Expanded development	No Impact	
	Added use-specific standards and changed use review processes from Conditional to Allowed	Expanded development	Cost Decrease	
	Limited or removed permission for a small number of uses in newly combined districts	Create some nonconformities	Unsure of Impact	
	Revised cottage court standards for greater flexibility and to clarify that tiny homes are allowed	Expanded development	No Impact/Cost Decrease	
	Adjusted Manufactured Home Community density standards to align with base zone district	Expanded development	No Impact	
	Made accessory dwelling units (ADU) provisions more flexible (number allowed, parking, and design)	Expanded development	Cost Decrease	
	Created accessory use table and generally expanded allowed accessory uses	Expanded development	No Impact	
21.05	Site and Structure Development Standards			
	Revised underground utilities requirement to no longer require existing overhead utilities to be undergrounded	1. Expanded development of some infill lots 2. Visual impacts of existing lines remain	Cost Decrease	The utility undergrounding requirement predates this Z&DC update, reflecting a community preference. This requirement can have significant cost impacts on development.
	Removed standards redundant or conflicting with TEDS or SSID	No Impact	No Impact	
	Clarified language to specify Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan Implementation	No Impact	Cost Increase	Reflecting concerns that Ped/Bike Plan implementation will impose additional costs
	Simplification of open space dedication requirements, removal of MAI appraiser requirement	Potential loss of appropriately located park land	Cost Decrease	Inability for City to implement Parks and Recreation
	Access, turn lane, oversizing standards grouped and edited for clarity	No impact	No Impact	Open Space plan effectively and potential equity issues in application
	Maintained current policy and standards on the use of private roads	No Impact	No Impact	
	Residential compatibility standards added (structure location or height)	Design requirement	Cost Increase	
	Building layout standards for single-family attached and multifamily development	Design requirement	Cost Increase/Unsure	
	Expansion of Horizon Drive District and North Avenue Overlay to most mixed-use and commercial	Design requirement	Cost Increase	
	Expanded allowance for drive-thru restaurants in 24 Road Corridor	Change in allowed use	No Impact	Restaurant drive-thrus are currently prohibited in MU zoning districts

Section Title/Description	Impact on Future Development	Impact on Construction Costs	Comments
21.07 Landscaping, Buffering, and Screening			
Changed significant tree requirement to not require preservation for industrial projects and for infill projects less than one acre	Potential loss of some significant trees	Cost Decrease	Change to the applicability of the Landscaping regulations adopted in Dec. 2022 to reflect development and site layout concerns
21.08 Off-Street Parking			
Significantly reduced off-street (on-site) vehicle parking requirements for many commercial and industrial uses	Expanded development	Cost Decrease	Surface parking as a principal use is not currently allowed Downtown
Eliminated minimum parking requirements for nonresidential uses in some infill areas	Expanded development	Cost Decrease	
Expanded parking Decreases allowed through administrative approval	Expanded development	Cost Decrease	
Allow the creation of long-term commercial parking lots (surface parking) on vacant lots Downtown	Change in allowed use	No Impact/Cost Decrease	
Revised short-term bicycle parking requirements	Expanded requirement	Cost Increase	
Added new long-term bicycle parking requirements	New requirement	Cost Increase	
Referenced new state model code for electric vehicle charging requirements	Per Colorado Statute	Cost Increase	
21.09 Subdivision Standards			
Cul-de-sac to arterial or collector street ped/bike connection requirement added (10' easement)	New dedication, limited	Cost Increase	Dedication to improve pedestrian connections
21.11 Outdoor Lighting			
Incorporated maximum lighting temperature requirement per International Dark-Sky Association (with flexibility for Director to allow limited increases)	Change to bulb type	No Impact	
21.14 Measurements and Definitions			
Clarified that HUD certified manufactured homes are allowed where single-family detached development is allowed.	Use clarification	No Impact	
Revised tiny home definition to align with state statute, to allow for a tiny home that meets DOH approval and is on a chassis	Use clarification	No Impact	
Added co-housing definition and clarified applicabilty to cottage courts	Use clarification	No Impact/Cost Decrease	
Clarified boarding/rooming house definition	Use clarification	No Impact	

ZONING & DEVELOPMENT CODE COMMITTEE 2022-2023

No.	Name	Background/Profession	Member of Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee
1	Colin St. Clair	Neighborhood Advocate, Real Estate Broker	
2	Kevin Bray	Bray Real Estate, Developer	
3	Mike Foster	Coldwell Banker, Commercial Broker	X
4	Ivan Geer	River City Engineering, Professional Engineer	X
5	Mark Austin	Austin Civil Group, Professional Engineer	
6	Ron Abeloe	Chaparral West/Bella Partners, HBA, AMGD, WCCA	
7	Jane Quimby	La Plata Communities, Colorado West Land Trust	
8	Shelley Dackonish	Dufford Waldeck Law, Land Use Attorney	
9	Candace Carnahan	Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce	
10	Jonathan Purdy	Horizon Drive BID Executive Director	X
11	Brandon Stam	Downtown Grand Junction	
12	Bill Wade	Former Planning Commissioner, Homeward Bound	
13	Emilee Powell	Housing Resources of Colorado	
14	Jill Norris	Grand Junction Housing Authority	
15	Nancy Strippel	Parks and Recreation Advisory Board	
16	Andrew Teske	Planning Commission Chair	
17	Keith Ehlers	Planning Commission, Consultant	X

Erin Nix*

Director of Testing & Accom. at CMU

X

*withdrew on 07.22.23

Z&DC Committee	Public Engagement	Planning Commission Workshops	City Council Workshops
4/6/2022	4/5/2022 (Kick Off)	6 Jan 2022 (Z&DC Assign.)	4/6/2022
5/17/2022	4/6/2022 (Kick Off)	7 Apr 2022 (Public Engage.)	6/13/2022
6/15/2022	4/7/2022 (Kick Off)	5/19/2022	3/14/2022
9/6/2022	4/14/2022 (HBA)	7/7/2022	5/16/2022
11/1/2022	4/22/2022 (MC CommUNITY)	4 Aug 2022 (Assess. Report)	9/19/2022
11/10/2022	4/28/2022 (GJARA)	8 Sep 2022 (Module 1)	10/31/2022
11/17/2022	5/6/2022 (WCLCC)	6 Oct 2022 (ADUs, STRs)	12/19/2022
12/19/2022	6/14/2022 (Lion's Club)	20 Oct 2022 (ADUs, STRs)	1/9/2023
1/19/2023	11/3/2022 (AMGD Meeting)	11/3/2022	2/27/2023 (1:1)
1/23/2023	11/3/2022 (#1 Public Engagement, Modules 1 & 2)	11/17/2022	2/28/2023 (1:1)
1/30/2023	11/4/2022 (#2 Public Engagement, Modules 1 & 2)	12/20/2022	3/6/2023 (1:1)
2/21/2023	11/4/2022 (#3 Public Engagement, Modules 1 & 2)	1/5/2023	3/13/2023
2/27/2023	1/19/2023 (Public Engagement, Module 3)	1/19/2023	6/12/2023 (Joint with DCC)
3/3/2023	1/20/2023 (Public Engagement, Module 3)	2/23/2023	8/14/2023
3/17/2023	2/8/2023 (Chamber of Commerce Webinar)	3/8/2023	12/13/2023
3/21/2023		3/9/2023	
4/26/2023		3/22/2023	
5/17/2023		3/23/2023	
5/31/2023		5/18/2023	
6/14/2023		6/22/2023	
6/28/2023		7/6/2023	
7/12/2023		7/20/2023	
7/26/2023		8/17/2023	
8/9/2023		9/7/2023	
8/23/2023		9/21/2023	
9/6/2023		10/5/2023	
9/13/2023		10/19/2023	
9/20/2023		10/24/2023	
10/4/2023		11/9/2023	
10/10/2023	Packet Page 256		



Grand Junction City Council

Workshop Session

Item #1.e.

Meeting Date: June 30, 2025

Presented By:

Department: City Manager's Office

Submitted By: Kelsey Coleman

Information

SUBJECT:

City Council Community Engagement Strategy Discussion

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City Council has expressed a strong desire to deepen its connection with the public and create more meaningful opportunities for dialogue. The City recognizes the importance of meeting residents where they already are: in their neighborhoods, at local events, and through every day, familiar community spaces.

BACKGROUND OR DETAILED INFORMATION:

The proposed plan reflects feedback from Council following the June 2 workshop which can be further discussed during the workshop on June 30. The purpose of this proposal is to establish a flexible, intentional, and community-centered engagement framework that enables all Councilmembers to participate meaningfully in public outreach while accommodating differences in schedules, capacity, and engagement styles.

This strategy builds on existing systems by leveraging trusted community partners, integrating into pre-scheduled events, and offering multiple levels of participation. It supports informal engagement focused on listening, informing, educating, and building authentic connections. The approach is designed to be proactive and grounded in accessibility.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

SUGGESTED ACTION:

This item is for discussion only.

Attachments

1. Council Workshop_June30_Supporting Document

MEET YOU THERE COMMUNICATION OUTLINE

Engagement Structure

1. Monthly Engagement Frequency

Councilmembers have the option to engage in 2-3 activities per month, outside of their regular meetings, which include:

- **Neighborhood Dialogues** (every other month; rotating neighborhood and times)
- **Partner/community plug-in events** (Councilmember participation in local events or gatherings)
- **Optional seasonal or special topic event**

2. Neighborhood Dialogues

As part of the Meet You There initiative, these group conversations bring City Council face-to-face with people across the city for genuine, two-way dialogue. Designed to foster deeper listening and trust-building, they're flexible, accessible, and focused. These intimate, town hall-style events create space for residents to speak freely and be heard.

3. Social Media Campaign: Meet You There: Online Edition

As an extension of the Meet You There initiative, we will launch a social media Q&A series with Councilmembers—bringing open, informal conversations into the digital spaces where residents already spend time.

4. Engage GJ Email Campaign: Meet You There – Ask a Councilmember

For those who can't make it to an in-person event, the Meet You There: Ask a Councilmember series will be open to all those who call GJ home. Residents can submit topics of interest, see what others are asking, and hear directly from their elected officials.

5. Meet Your Council Media Plan

A multimedia strategy to humanize and highlight each Council member through radio interviews, social media clips, articles and website videos. This media plan gives residents a window into who their representatives are, what they care about, and how they're working for the community. This builds trust and approachability through consistent, accessible storytelling.

Objectives

1. **Increase the number of two-way dialogue opportunities** between Councilmembers and residents from July–December 2025 compared to the same 2024 period
2. **Show up consistently and intentionally in the spaces where residents already gather** by creating a regular Council presence at community events/gatherings, with at least six rotating potential Council appearances per quarter
3. **Design a flexible participation model by July 2025** that includes rotating event times, virtual/digital integrations and optional co-hosting, ensuring all Councilmembers have a viable pathway to participate
4. **Improve public awareness of Council engagement** by increasing visibility and reach across digital platforms, with a focus on growing viewership and engagement with council-related content

Illustrative Engagement Framework:

This framework outlines potential engagement efforts across Q3 of 2025, intended to guide discussion and coordination, not to reflect confirmed events or commitments.

Sample Communication Plan

July

- **Coffee with the City Manager + Councilmember**
- **Community Plug-In:** Fourth of July Parade, Food Truck Friday, GJ Founding Day popsicles at City Hall
- **Community Plug-In:** Mitzvah Masa Youth Group recycling tour

August

- **Community Plug-In:** Market on Main Event- City Council booth
- **Community Plug-In:** Local senior center visit
- **Community Plug-In:** P&R Western Colorado Senior Games
- **Social Media Campaign:** Launch Meet You There: Online Edition Council spotlight

September

- **Neighborhood Dialogues:** Town Hall style conversation (Possible topic: Strategic Plan, Infrastructure, Budget, Housing)
- **Community Plug-In:** Service organization lunch presentation
- **Community Plug-In:** Downtown Car Show
- **Social Media Campaign:** Second spotlight
- **Engage GJ:** Meet You There: Online Edition

Memo

To: Mayor Kennedy and Councilmembers

From: Mike Bennett, City Manager
 Selestina Sandoval, City Clerk

Date: June 10, 2025

Subject: Volunteer Board Vacancies

Staff is requesting City Council members discuss who will serve on the interview team for the following vacancies:

Volunteer Board or Commission	Vacancies (E = Eligible to Reapply)	Application Deadline
Grand Junction Housing Authority Council Liaison: Laurel Cole	1. Richard Krohn (E) (exp. 10/31/2025) 2. John Howe (exp. 10/31/2025)	July 30, 2025 Chair: Richard Krohn Interviews to be held in August
Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals Will need two council members	1. Shanon Secrest (E) (exp. 10/31/2025) 2. Kenneth Scissors (E) (exp. 10/31/2025) 3. 1 st Alternate (exp. 10/31/2026) 4. 2 nd Alternate (exp. 10/31/2025)	July 30, 2025 Chair: Andrew Teske Interviews to be held in August