For a lasting end to homelessness that leaves no one behind.
Dear friends,

Our 2020 Annual Report describes the progress of Built for Zero communities to reduce and end the crisis of homelessness.

Some crises, like the coronavirus pandemic, jolt us out of our status quo and force us to change our daily routines. Others, like the racial justice reckoning spurred by George Floyd’s murder, remind us that our status quo itself is a persistent state of crisis.

Homelessness has become a status-quo emergency. But this moment offers a bold new choice: to no longer accept the inevitability of homelessness in the richest country on earth, and use the existing proof of what works to end it.

It’s been said that when a crisis occurs, whether change happens depends on the ideas that are “lying around.” Our Built for Zero approach proved ready for this crisis and was poised to drive real change.

In the past year, we doubled down with the more than 80 communities in the Built for Zero network to see that not an ounce of crisis-induced willpower to end homelessness went to waste. Decades of learning how to build systems that make homelessness rare and brief meant that Built for Zero communities gained ground on homelessness throughout this extraordinary time. We share the powerful results throughout this Report.

And the evidence that homelessness is solvable was recognized. Community Solutions was chosen as a finalist for the MacArthur Foundation’s 100&Change Award, which will fund a single proposal that promises real and measurable progress in solving a critical problem of our time. The honor of being considered for this award highlights the effectiveness of our approach and the possibility of ending homelessness in any community across the nation.

In Amanda Gorman’s stirring poem on Inauguration day, she reminded us that “the norms and notions of what ‘just is,’ isn’t always justice.” We are grateful for the support of our partners and communities as we strive to reject homelessness as something that “just is” — and create a world that truly promises justice.

Warmly,

ROSANNE HAGGERTY
President, Community Solutions

Community Solutions named finalist for the MacArthur Foundation 100&Change Competition

If selected for the $100 million grant, we aim to accelerate an end to homelessness in 75 U.S. communities of all sizes, setting the stage for any community to eliminate homelessness.
In 2020, three more Built for Zero communities reached functional zero!

BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA / CHRONIC

ABILENE, TEXAS / CHRONIC

LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA / VETERAN

Fast Company: “This California city just ended chronic homelessness”

One of only three communities to have ended both veteran and chronic homelessness!
84 U.S. COMMUNITIES MAKE UP THE BUILT FOR ZERO MOVEMENT

11 NEW COMMUNITIES JOINED BUILT FOR ZERO IN 2020

31 COMMUNITIES HAVE DRIVEN REDUCTIONS IN HOMELESSNESS IN 2020

3 COMMUNITIES IN COUNTRIES ARE PARTICIPATING IN BUILT FOR ZERO INTERNATIONALLY: AUSTRALIA, CANADA, AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

130,000+ PEOPLE HOUSED BY BUILT FOR ZERO COMMUNITIES SINCE JANUARY 2015
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Built for Zero demonstrated the power of collaboration

Our work last year was defined by two forces: the pandemic and the urgent need for racial justice.

Homelessness has always been a matter of life and death for the people experiencing it. COVID-19 underscored that it’s a public health crisis for us all.

Built for Zero was born out of the understanding that ending homelessness requires a public health approach. It requires a commitment to driving population-level outcomes, and the data-driven, coordinated systems necessary to deliver them. Those systems enabled many communities to respond quickly in the face of this new crisis.

But local leaders also needed new support to keep people experiencing homelessness — and the staff serving them — safe. At the beginning of the pandemic, we surveyed our communities on how to best deliver that support. Communities flagged the need for resources, thought partnership, and advocacy.

In response, our team established a rapid feedback loop to surface the specific challenges cities were facing, and source solutions. We brought together leaders from health care and the homeless sector to share how they were collaborating in new ways. We worked with partners to ensure PPE was available for communities and to expand COVID-19 testing and monitoring for homeless populations.

And communities didn’t just weather the storm — they continued to make progress.
Pandemic response efforts have generated greater understanding that homelessness is a critical public health issue. COVID-19 changed the urgency with which our country treats homelessness and our sense of what can be done. We can’t go back.

The threat of COVID-19 and risk of experiencing homelessness don’t impact everyone equally. Black and Native Americans are more likely to experience homelessness — and more likely to require hospitalization from COVID-19.

We know that systems that are not explicitly designed to identify and respond to racial inequity will potentially sustain and even deepen it. The homeless response system is not immune to this reality.

That’s why in 2020, with our partners, communities, and people with lived experience, we developed a framework to help communities measure and design a racially equitable homeless response system. Moving forward, Built for Zero communities will be integrating this framework into their journey to reach functional zero.

COVID-19 will continue to pose a risk for our neighbors experiencing homelessness. People of color are more likely to experience homelessness and now millions of Americans are threatened by the pandemic’s economic consequences. Like so many communities, the nation must see this as a moment to accelerate progress forward, and address the conditions that made our communities and neighbors so vulnerable in the first place.

— Beth Sandor and Jake Maguire, co-directors of Built for Zero

Built for Zero: one of Fast Company’s 10 World Changing Solutions 2020

Adelaide, Australia became the first community outside of North America to achieve a quality, by-name list.
Last March, before anyone experiencing homelessness was diagnosed with coronavirus in Jacksonville, Fla., Dawn Gilman and her team sprang into action. Gilman, the CEO of Changing Homelessness, knew that at the time there were about 2,000 people experiencing homelessness in the area — and only 1,100 shelter beds. She also knew that people experiencing homelessness tend to have underlying medical conditions, making them more susceptible to the coronavirus. They had to find a way to get this vulnerable population into safe spaces for isolation and quarantine — and out of crowded shelters or dangerous conditions on the street. In Jacksonville, Gilman’s team developed a plan to triage people experiencing homelessness, so that the most medically vulnerable could be kept safe.

Across the country, communities secured additional shelter space during the pandemic. In Aurora, Colorado, the city rented heated wedding tents in order to spread out the beds in the existing shelters. In Vermont, an entire Holiday Inn became quarantine and isolation space for up to 150 people experiencing homelessness and those unable to quarantine at home.

Tableau announced $2 million of support that included investing in training for 500 people working at homeless services organizations around the country to become experts in data use and analysis.

Access to critical data is also enabling widespread testing in shelters and among homeless populations on the street. Communities with a by-name list — an essential element of Built for Zero — have an actionable database of their most vulnerable residents. These communities have used their real-time data to connect people with quarantine and isolation units, with permanent housing, and to provide ongoing support.

Kaiser Permanente, Community Solutions, and Quest Diagnostics worked together to expand the testing and monitoring of cases among homeless population and frontline staff. The partnership delivered testing at homeless service sites, shelters, and encampments across Kaiser Permanente regions.

Community Solutions also teamed up with Quest Laboratories, local organizations, and county officials to test highly vulnerable people experiencing homelessness for COVID-19 in Maricopa County, Ariz., and Jacksonville, Fla.
Moving everyone into permanent homes

As in every other sector, the pandemic forced homeless service providers to dramatically alter how they operated. But, in the face of incredible odds — they kept housing people.

The Gulf Coast team in Mississippi has not slowed down. Despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic, they strengthened relationships with about 100 local landlords to keep pace with their average weekly housing placement targets.

“When this is all done with, my hope is that everyone is out of the woods and into housing or has a plan, and we have ended unsheltered homelessness. So we have not lost sight of the goals — we’re really doubling down,” said Mary Simons, Executive Director and CEO of Open Doors Homeless Coalition in Gulf Coast.

Equipping communities with new tools

Community Solutions and Kaiser Permanente created a cost estimator tool that uses local data to help communities estimate the need and cost for providing quarantine and isolation units, and permanent housing, for people experiencing homelessness. This equipped communities to know what to ask for when FEMA and stimulus resources became available.

In Sacramento, policymakers used the tool to evaluate the number of quarantine and isolation spaces needed to protect the city’s homeless population. City and county officials approved a $15 million plan that allocated significant federal relief funding to ensure 990 safe isolation spaces for homeless individuals.

Connecting communities with resources

In the Built for Zero community of Phoenix, homeless service providers worked to protect people experiencing homelessness from COVID-19, with the support of Rocket Mortgage. The team distributed 14,000 masks, secured COVID tests, provided meals, and opened emergency housing to assist more than 1,000 individuals through the crisis.
Equipping the homeless sector with racial equity tools

Racism and homelessness are inextricably linked. People of color, particularly Black and Native Americans, are disproportionately impacted at virtually every phase of the experience.

Like so many other systems in America, the homeless response system produces racial disparities. This system can maintain or exacerbate these disparities — or work to dismantle them.

We heard from communities in the Built for Zero movement that they wanted to address racial disparities in their homeless systems. In response, we worked with local homeless services leaders and people who experienced homelessness to develop a framework for understanding and improving the racial equity of a community’s homeless response system.

This framework supports communities in ensuring their systems aren’t leaving anyone behind as they end homelessness. This is just one tool in the movement toward racial equity in our field, driven by a growing coalition of organizations within the homeless sector.

“...We need to interrogate every aspect of our system, and we need to put a vision of equity out in the world so we know where we are heading."

— Regina Cannon, Chief Equity and Impact Officer at C4 Innovations. Cannon was a speaker at the virtual Built for Zero Learning Session, held in October.
Bakersfield, Calif. featured in documentary

Leaders from Bakersfield and Built for Zero were featured in “The Way Home,” a short-form documentary series from KTF Films and Bread and Butter Films created with support from Kaiser Permanente to highlight the link between housing and health.

“Ending chronic homelessness in Bakersfield and Kern County is not just a big deal for the people who live in Kern County. It also acts as a model for what it takes across a large area in California to drive population-level reductions. We are seeing communities everywhere — from a community of 500k to 4 million — being able to do that.”

— Beth Sandor, Co-Director of Built for Zero

Watch the documentary

Bakersfield, California, is one of five U.S. communities that has ended chronic homelessness.
Taking veteran homelessness out of the shadows

For John Meier, ending veteran homelessness is personal. He helped lead the efforts in Abilene, Texas, to functionally end homelessness for veterans, making the experience rare overall and brief when it occurs. But the connection runs deeper.

“I came into this field by personal experience. So I look at every homeless veteran, and think: that’s me,” he said.

Meier experienced homelessness himself after serving in the U.S. Marines Corps. His story was shared with a national audience through a Rocket Mortgage campaign that highlights Built for Zero and our partnership.
Harnessing urgency and opportunity to close housing gaps

The pandemic spurred a new urgency to solve homelessness. It also created new opportunities to expand affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness.

Leaders rose to meet this challenge across our Built for Zero communities. Our real estate team worked with local partners, social impact investors, and state and local government leaders to quickly bring hundreds of units online for vulnerable individuals and families.

Creating affordable housing using Low-Income Housing Tax Credits can take several years. By using social impact financing to acquire existing properties, housing can be made available for those experiencing homelessness in a matter of months.

Why use social impact financing?

The innovative social impact investment model consists of four key components:

- **Investors** who seek a demonstrated social impact and a return on their investment
- **Partnerships** with local nonprofit organizations with the same vision and goals
- **Properties** connected to the housing system so that housing is prioritized for people experiencing homelessness who are most in need
- **An enhanced property management model** that offers support, community resources, and other services that tenants may need to stay stably housed
Santa Fe

Community Solutions purchased Santa Fe Suites hotel in December, a project funded by the city, which contributed $2 million in CARES Act funds, the State of New Mexico, and social impact investors.

“One of the things that has happened because of COVID is a sense of urgency and innovation in deploying our assets very strategically to address homelessness,” said Mayor Alan Webber. “And it’s worked to help keep people safe.”

More than a third of the units at Santa Fe Suites are reserved for those transitioning out of chronic and veteran homelessness, with the remaining units now affordable workforce housing for the community.

“These 123 apartments provide much needed housing for people coming out of homelessness and working individuals with low to moderate incomes,” said Edward Archuleta, Director of St. Elizabeth Shelters and Supportive Housing, the manager of the property. “It is a unique housing model that hopefully will be replicated elsewhere in the country.”

Atlanta

In Atlanta, many veterans remain homeless, despite having rental subsidy vouchers, because of a lack of available housing. To begin closing this gap, Community Solutions purchased Centra Villa, a 132-unit apartment complex to create permanent affordable housing for veterans experiencing homelessness.

The project secured a HomeFirst grant from the city, a social impact loan from the Atlanta Affordable Housing Fund, and a Fannie Mae-backed mortgage through Bellwether Enterprise Real Estate Capital. The Home Depot Foundation also provided critical funding to the project.

As apartments become vacant, veterans are matched to the vacancies by the local team working to end veteran homelessness.

“Centra Villa provides an example of how communities can leverage social impact investments to quickly acquire and target existing units for people experiencing homelessness,” said Allyson Randolph, Assistant Director of Real Estate at Community Solutions.

Operation Surprise

In honor of Veterans Day, the Home Depot Foundation paid one month’s rent for all veteran tenants at Abrigo Apartments in metro Denver and the John and Jill Ker Conway Residence in Washington D.C. The Home Depot Foundation works to improve the homes and lives of U.S. veterans through their commitment to end veteran homelessness. The Foundation has supported the work of Community Solution since 2011 and invested more than $350 million in support of veterans in need.
Moving upstream to prevent homelessness

By the time someone experiences homelessness, they are likely to have touched other systems, like healthcare, foster care, or the criminal legal system.

We’re working to understand how staff working in these systems can join forces to disrupt inflow into homelessness.

Five communities are testing new ways for local organizations and government agencies to collaborate to ensure that transitions from institutions or housing crises do not result in homelessness.

We are identifying:

- **Who needs to be involved** in the cross-sector work;
- **What structure can create shared accountability** and learning for driving reductions in inflow;
- **How this work can be sustainably funded**;
- **What policies** can support inflow reduction, with a particular focus on the **impacts of racism**;
- **How a community can be equipped with the data required** to drive these efforts and understand whether or not they are reducing inflow.

This strategy incorporates critical learning from our ongoing research into how veterans come to experience homelessness, and efforts to eliminate inflow within two zip codes in North Hartford, Conn. with the region’s highest rates of homelessness.

Hartford Spotlight

In Hartford, data and research around inflow into homelessness showed the effects of evictions/informal displacements, the criminal justice system and unmet behavioral health needs. Stakeholders from these systems are now working together to eliminate inflow into homelessness.

An idea being tested is having a role within the community to focus solely on ending inflow into homelessness. This position manages the ecosystem of partners, builds and sustains will around the goal of reducing inflow, and identifies and supports the testing of interventions.


“There are hundreds of agencies and organizations that exist to help the homeless, but how many organizations are dedicated to preventing people from becoming homeless?”
We must prevent inflow into homelessness in order to end it

Urban Institute and Community Solutions release findings from pilot on veteran inflow into homelessness.

A Community Solutions and Urban Institute report aimed at understanding veterans’ pathways into homelessness and promising strategies for reducing inflow into homelessness, details a two-year-long pilot project in four Built for Zero communities.

Community Solutions’ four key takeaways:

- A cross-sector accountability structure is needed with clear responsibility for reducing inflow into homelessness.
- Policy change and advocacy are critical to creating an environment aimed at reducing inflow into homelessness.
- Funding must be specifically dedicated to reducing inflow.
- A community needs to have visibility into the number of people who are entering into literal homelessness in as close to real time as possible.

These insights will help Built for Zero support communities in the critical work of preventing inflow into homelessness (see p. 18).

Read the report
Partnering with health care to end homelessness

Community Solutions and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement are working with teams from five communities to explore how health care systems can contribute to communities ending chronic homelessness.

The two-year pilot aims to identify the meaningful, measurable, and transformative contributions health care can make toward ending chronic homelessness in a community, and lay the groundwork to spread and scale these solutions nationally.

The health system in each community will focus on improving its role as an anchor institution to achieve these population-level outcomes:
- reductions in homelessness
- lower health care costs
- improved population health

The pilot project team identified five “pillars” where comprehensive, meaningful action by health systems could shift these outcomes:

- Inflow: Prevent the inflow of individuals into chronic homelessness
- Commitment: Build sustained belief in and commitment to ending homelessness at the population level
- Governance: Establish shared language and mechanisms for collaboration, measurement and governance
- Financing: Establish and build upon financial mechanisms aligned to reducing and ending chronic homelessness
- Housing placements: Increase housing placements and retention rates for those experiencing chronic homelessness

Participating communities and health care partners include:
- Bakersfield/Kern County, California - Kaiser Permanente, CommonSpirit Health
- Washington County, Oregon - Kaiser Permanente
- Sacramento County, California - Kaiser Permanente, CommonSpirit Health, University of California - Davis Health, Sutter Health
- Anchorage, Alaska - Providence St. Joseph Health
- Chattanooga, Tennessee - CommonSpirit Health
The Swift factory opened its doors

Community Solutions works upstream of homelessness in North Hartford, Conn. In the two zip codes with the highest rates of homelessness in the region, we work with residents and partners to change the conditions that make residents vulnerable to homelessness. At the centerpiece of our efforts is the newly reopened Swift Factory, a former gold leaf manufacturing center located at the heart of the neighborhood that stood vacant since 2004. It has been transformed into a vibrant hub for entrepreneurship, training, learning, and community engagement.

Swift opened its doors in the fall of 2020 after a 10-year community engagement, fundraising, planning, and construction effort. During that period, residents prioritized the need for creating jobs and small business opportunities within the community.

The redeveloped Swift campus is home to:
- **Incubator kitchens** for start-up and expanding food businesses
- **Affordable office spaces** for small businesses and community organizations
- A state of the art Hartford Public Library branch (in planning) that will feature education and workforce development services;
- A **Community Financial Center** (in planning);
- An **elementary school**
- **Health and counseling services**
- An anticipated **150 long-term jobs** once all spaces are in operation

Supporting Black-owned businesses

The majority of Swift’s tenants are Black entrepreneurs and many are businesses led by women.
North Hartford Community Land Trust

With Swift completed, a new phase of work has begun. With our Hartford-based affiliate, Northeast Neighborhood Partners, Inc (NNPI), we have formed the North Hartford Community Land Trust. The NHCLT brings together residents and community stakeholders to preserve affordable housing, improve its quality and energy efficiency and ultimately deliver healthier and safer living conditions.

Community First school opens in Hartford’s Promise Zone

The community’s push to open an independent elementary school in Hartford’s North End came to fruition in 2020. Located on the Swift campus, the school provides an alternative educational option for local families, currently offering Kindergarten and first grades with plans to expand to fifth grade.
United for Brownsville responded to COVID-19

In the face of threats posed by the coronavirus pandemic, United for Brownsville teamed up with Riverdale Avenue Community School and nonprofit Brighter Bites in the historic neighborhood of Brownsville in Brooklyn to ensure local families could get essential items and fresh produce.

United for Brownsville is a program of SCO Family of Services in partnership with Community Solutions.

Increasing access to early intervention

United for Brownsville’s efforts have resulted in an unprecedented increase in referrals of Brownsville children to early intervention services, according to data from the Bureau of Early Intervention at the NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene. Now UB is working to keep increasing referrals and focusing on follow-up, to ensure that Black and Latinx children in Brownsville access these services at rates comparable to children citywide.

Athenia Rodney honored as one of Robin Hood’s 2020 “Heroes of New York”

Rodney is Community Engagement Specialist at UB.

By the numbers

UB distributed:
- 233,775 pounds of produce
- 23,750 masks and 4,410 boxes of disinfecting wipes
- 1,154 soap bars and 7,000 hand sanitizers
- 65,100 diapers
- 325 “Books for Brownsville” literacy gift bags
- 1,000 “Brooklyn Book Bodega” books

HOME DELIVERIES WERE MADE TO THE MOST VULNERABLE BROWNSVILLE RESIDENTS

280 HOME DELIVERIES WERE MADE TO THE MOST VULNERABLE BROWNSVILLE RESIDENTS

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2020 Financials
PRE AUDITED

**Revenue**
- 29.4% Earned Revenue
- 7.8% Individuals
- 62.8% Foundation Grants

**Expenses**
- 17.1% Real Estate
- 67.9% Built For Zero
- 7.2% Management General
- 7.7% Fundraising

**Revenue** $14,477,423

**Expenses** $9,861,261
Thanks to our partners!

Core Partners
- Bank of America Charitable Foundation
- Cassiopeia
- Colorado Health Foundation
- Ensworth Charitable Foundation
- Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
- JPMorgan Chase Foundation
- Larson Family Foundation
- Mary J. Hutchins Foundation
- Melville Charitable Trust
- Metlife Foundation
- New York City Council
- Oak Foundation
- Robin Hood Foundation
- Rockefeller Foundation
- RX Foundation
- The Sirius Fund
- USAA Savings Bank
- Walker & Dunlop
- Wells Fargo Foundation
- Weil, Gotshal & Manges

Strategic Partners
- Boehringer Ingelheim Cares Foundation
- Charles & Mildred Schnurmacher Foundation
- John H. & Ethel G. Noble Charitable Trust
- Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, Inc.
- Starr Foundation
- Newman’s Own Foundation
- Stella & Charles Guttman Foundation
- Select Equity Group, Inc.

Mission Partners
- Amazon Web Services
- Anne J. Caudal Foundation
- Arnow Family Fund
- Butler Family Fund
- M&T Charitable Foundation
- People’s United Foundation
- Gen Next Foundation
- Maximilian E. & Marion O. Hoffman Foundation
- NYC DOT
- Richard David Donchian Foundation

Supporting Partners
- Arnow Family Fund
- Butler Family Fund
- M&T Charitable Foundation
- People’s United Foundation
- Gen Next Foundation
- Maximilian E. & Marion O. Hoffman Foundation
- NYC DOT
- Richard David Donchian Foundation
For a lasting end to homelessness that leaves no one behind.