

# Pathways Home Q&A

## 1. Where can I find the Pathways Home plan document?

Here's a link to the plan: <https://adobe.ly/3OxVN5A>. A PDF version is attached to this email. The public can also view the plan at [lacrossecounty.org](http://lacrossecounty.org) under "latest news". [Click here](#) to view a news release announcing the plan with comments from city and county leaders.

## 2. Who is going to pay for this?

There is no dollar cost attached to Pathways Home. One of the key parts of the plan is to better coordinate and maximize existing resources and funding. This means, for example, making sure there's no duplication of services and that funding from outside the city and the county (things like federal housing vouchers and private donations) are being fully used. It also means having a highly coordinated and effective process in place to connect individuals to housing and other services.

## 3. Why should we believe this is going to work?

Pathways Home follows successful models from places like Houston, Texas, and Rockford, Illinois. Those models share common steps that Pathways Home will follow. This includes better coordination of services, consistent leadership, and comprehensive case management (this means having many people around the table to work with individuals to help them get housed and stay housed). The city and county will report results as the plan is being implemented.

## 4. What is the goal?

The goal of Pathways Home is to achieve Functional Zero (ending long-term homelessness) by 2029. This would mean that while individuals might still become homeless, those instances would be rare and brief, and a robust system would exist to quickly get people into housing. Along the path to functional zero, we will end homeless encampments in our community once and for all.

## 5. Why are we doing this now and how is this different from previous efforts?

Both the city and county have been allocating more resources to addressing homelessness in recent years, yet the problem has persisted. Our community is demanding results, and this plan will ensure resources are used in the most effective way. This is the first-time local government (city and county) is taking the lead role in homelessness response. Previous efforts to address homelessness have often been reactive and short-term in nature. At least in part, this was due to the lack of a clear plan and coordinated leadership, which Pathways Home provides. Pathways Home is focused on long-term, sustainable solutions.



## **6. What is the cost of homelessness and how can this plan help?**

Homelessness adds costs to our law enforcement, business, and health care sectors. Those costs will be reduced if our plan is successful. A chronically homeless person costs taxpayers an average of \$35,578 per year. Costs are reduced on average by 49% [\(source\)](#) when that person is moved into supportive housing (housing paired with case management). Without stable housing, homeless people cycle in and out of emergency departments inpatient hospital stays, psychiatric centers, detox programs, and jail. This results in high public costs and poor outcomes. Pathways Home will lower those costs and give people the stability they need to more self-sufficient.

## **7. Why are there so many homeless people in La Crosse?**

The number of homeless people has increased in La Crosse over recent years, as it has in many other parts of the country. There are many reasons for this but three of the biggest are a shortage of housing, homeless encampments, and barriers to help for people with mental health conditions. Pathways Home addresses each of those areas. More supportive housing, for families and individuals, is being created to help on the housing question. Encampments will no longer be tolerated once our new homeless response system is up and running. On mental health, Pathways Home will dedicate county behavioral health staff to improving access to support for homeless people. The support will give individuals a better chance of getting and keeping housing. The plan also will use peer support networks (help from people who have had similar life experiences) to work with individuals.

## **8. What if some people who are homeless don't want the support being offered?**

Finding the specific barriers individuals face and working to connect them to the right resources will help. At present, services are fragmented, and information is not being collected and shared in a way that makes it easy to get the right resources to people at the right time. A minority of people may not want the support we can offer. However, once this plan is fully implemented, encampments will no longer be an option for people in La Crosse.

## **9. Who supports Pathways Home?**

Our two major health care providers - Gundersen and Mayo - have written a letter of support for the plan. Law enforcement leadership in the city and county also back the plan, as do members of our business community and many elected officials. All realize that the only way we can solve this issue is through a comprehensive, coordinated approach led by the partnership between the city and county.