EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HOMELESSNESS IN GREENVILLE COUNTY

An Addendum to the Greenville Homeless Alliance
2021 Report on Homelessness

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GHA | Greenville Homeless Alliance
Safe Affordable Homes For All

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

In April of 2022, the Greenville Homeless Alliance released an update to the 2019 [Report on Homelessness in Greenville County](#). The report used data gathered by the [Upstate Continuum of Care](#), [United Housing Connections](#), the City and County of Greenville, [SC Housing](#), [US Census Bureau](#), [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#), [Greenville Housing Fund](#), and the [Greenville County School District](#) to give a comprehensive look at the individuals experiencing homelessness in Greenville County.

While the report offered an update of key data, it did not address the impact and disparities that were brought to light during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In June 2022, more than 120 individual stakeholders representing over 60 different cross sector organizations across Greenville County participated in 10 listening sessions, multiple interviews, and the completion of survey questions. Participants were asked to speak about the negative, positive, and current impacts of COVID-19.

This check-in with stakeholders also allowed the Greenville Homeless Alliance to confirm that current advocacy efforts and strategic priorities, set by stakeholders, partners, and Steering Committee members in 2019, were still in alignment with community needs.

On the following pages, we will share feedback from stakeholders* categorized by the Greenville Homeless Alliance's five priorities.

- Increase Housing and Exits from Homelessness
- Reduce Barriers
- Strengthen Coordinated Response
- Support Transit
- Impact Policymaking

We hope this brief will provide deeper context to the 2021 Report on Homelessness and offer insight into current needs identified in our community for those experiencing homelessness and the organizations that serve them.

* Quotes in this report are attributed to a participant in a listening session or their organization.

Increase Housing and Exits From Homelessness

Shelter in Place

Shelter took on a new meaning for Greenville's most vulnerable residents after COVID-19 erupted in 2020. The sudden closure of schools, businesses, and public spaces, due to shelter in place mandates created an increase in the visibility of people experiencing literal homelessness. Frontline providers reported that emergency shelter beds remained full and more families had to double up due to strained finances. These closures led to an increased number of families losing their homes. Additionally, Unity Health on Main staff reported clients experiencing an increase in unsafe and inadequate housing with property owners unable to make repairs.

During COVID-19, emergency shelters in Greenville County did not close but had to pivot in how they operated. Listening sessions noted the increased stress of eliminating volunteers and relying solely on staff. As social distancing and other health safety measures were put into place, the number of unique individuals able to access an emergency shelter bed declined from 2,254 in 2019 to 1,919 in 2020. Both Safe Harbor and United Ministries' family emergency shelter, known as Interfaith Hospitality Network, had to shift to housing clients in hotels.

> "Prior to the pandemic, school was a safe shelter with access to at least two meals a day, restrooms, etc. When we went virtual some children lost transportation, access to food, and Wi-Fi to complete assignments."
>
> — *Unity Health on Main Staff*

In 2020, a collaborative effort led by Miracle Hill Ministries created a temporary quarantine shelter. In 2021, United Housing Connections worked with local partners to open a 32-bed quarantine shelter. Later in 2021, Pendleton Place opened new emergency shelter beds for youth and United Housing Connections transitioned the quarantine shelter into a 30, 60, 90-day program. Centralized funding through the United Way of Greenville County's COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund created an increased partnership between the frontline service providers who shifted staff to help Greenville County residents with food security and housing/utility assistance.

Listening sessions cited that one positive impact of COVID-19 was an increase in the awareness of homelessness in our community. This awareness led to a heightened understanding of families living in motels and the opportunity for the Greenville Homeless Alliance to begin working with new partners such as YMCA of Greenville. "When we piloted the food delivery program in the spring of 2020, we had no idea how long it would continue, or how far-reaching it would be," said YMCA of Greenville staff. "The reality is that this pandemic has made it incredibly tough for some families to feed their children, and the need stretches beyond the area we've been serving."

This reality was echoed throughout listening sessions as frontline providers reported seeing an influx of "first timers" and even seeing staff from service providers seek food and rental assistance. Step by Step Ministries staff said, "Our community is forever changed and there is no going back to normal."

Evictions

Evictions dramatically decreased because of moratoriums put into place at the federal and state level. However, there was not a COVID-19 safety net as the moratorium expired. Listening session participants noted that community partners came together from all sectors with the goal of keeping people healthy and housed, but unfortunately, in many cases, this effort fell short by not providing permanent, affordable housing options. According to Realtor.com, in April 2022, 66% of reporting renters believed that higher rents are the biggest strain on their finances. While the moratorium helped many Greenville County residents, local rent prices have increased by 23% over the previous year, according to Rent.com, impacting Black residents at a disproportionate rate.

United Housing Connections staff noted, "We are facing a severe housing shortage for low-income families. While the eviction moratorium helped keep people housed, many landlords were not able to keep their properties afloat operationally, so many low-income housing owners made the decision to sell at above market prices to investors willing to pay it. In turn, the units have been flipped to market rate, which leaves our low-income families without stable housing."

Greenville became a "Zoom Town" in 2021 making rental housing at $600/month or less nearly impossible to locate. Listening sessions noted the challenges for families to utilize the 54 historic U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development emergency housing vouchers issued to Greenville in July 2021 due to the lack of affordable options and landlords willing to accept vouchers. While Greenville is trending better than some areas of the country, The Greenville Housing Authority reports a 60% utilization rate of vouchers as of April 2022, even as the emergency housing vouchers have unprecedented financial incentives for landlords and assistance for participants.

See pg. 41 of the 2021 Report on Homelessness for a list of new housing in Greenville County that creates exits from homelessness.

Income and Homelessness
Eviction is also a barrier.

	Average Among Those Reporting Income	2022 One Bedroom Fair Market Rent in Greenville	% of Average Income Towards Rent
Unsheltered	$836	$871	100+%
Emergency Sheltered	$1028	$871	85%

Data from 2021 Downtown Survey, Upstate CoC and Emergency Shelter Barriers Survey 2020, GHA

Reduce Barriers

Mental Health

Listening session participants cited many of the barriers to exiting homelessness that existed before the pandemic were magnified as communities shut down. One of the top negative impacts discussed was an increase in mental health issues. Isolation, separation from support systems, and increased stress were all cited as contributing factors.

"We saw an increased stress in families/children at home, increased domestic violence, and fewer options to leave bad situations," shared one Unity Health on Main staff member.

Educators and service providers lost connection with many students and clients during this time. According to a report from the Urban Institute, many adults with physical and mental health conditions delayed accessing healthcare because of worry about exposure to COVID-19. Black adults were more likely than White or Hispanic/Latinx adults to report delaying or forgoing care. The report also notes adults with mental health conditions were at particularly high risk of delaying or forgoing care.

Greenville Reentry Coalition listening session participants noted that incarcerated adults and youth were isolated for long periods of time. Visitation and in-person training were stopped to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A Triune parishioner stated that he is now seeking more intensive mental health assistance because during COVID-19 he experienced setbacks mentally, physically, and economically, including the loss of five good friends in the past year and a half.

Participants noted that frontline service organization staff also experienced increased stress stating "everything happened to everyone all at once," "we were all affected in some way by COVID-19. It did not discriminate," and one nurse practitioner shared "this is the worst burnout of my career."

The death of George Floyd and disproportionate numbers of Black Americans dying from COVID-19 heightened community focus on systemic racism and increased emotional stress for many Greenville residents. New efforts to address systemic issues by groups like the Racial Equity + Economic Mobility (REEM) Commission and increased discussion of mental health awareness were noted as positive outcomes. Participants recognized the "wildly different experience" of the pandemic depended on factors like race, economic status, and political views.

Service Disruption

Listening session participants noted that the disruption of service from nonprofits also resulted in individuals experiencing homelessness having additional barriers to accessing services. Despite physical shutdowns, the loss of volunteers, and a decrease in staff, many frontline organizations continued to operate during the pandemic.

Both a lack of information and the prevalence of misinformation were cited by listening session participants as additional barriers to providing service, especially early in the pandemic.

Participants from PRISMA noted that the pandemic brought new insight into the medical needs of those experiencing homelessness. One participant shared that "It [healthcare] is a fragile structure that allows someone experiencing homelessness to get the medical care they need. If any piece in that structure moves, it can all fall apart. COVID-19 moved the pieces."
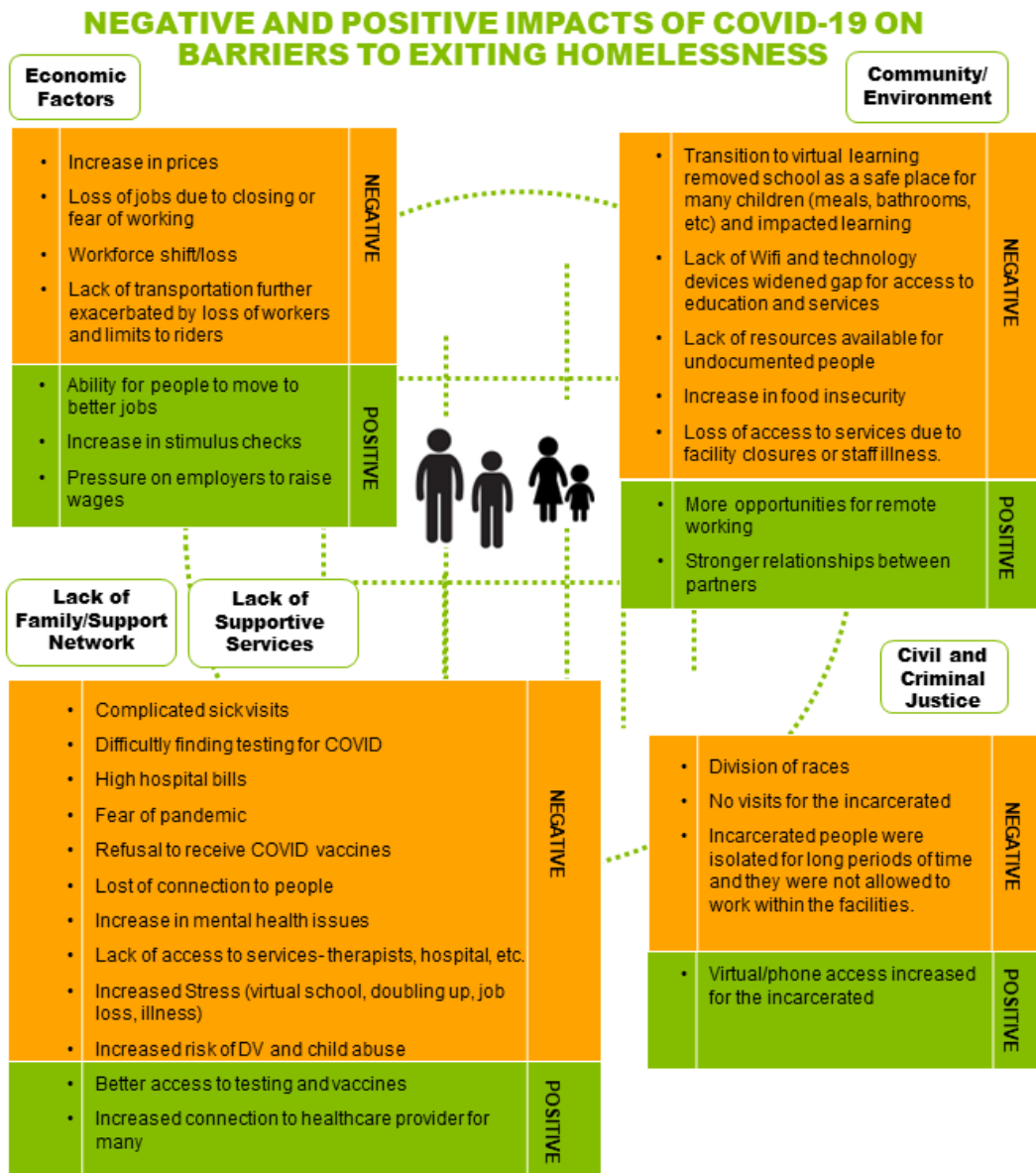
One group especially impacted by the shutdown were those living unsheltered who not only lost access to libraries, public restrooms, and indoor meal sites but also lost access to outreach professionals initially grounded by CDC guidelines.

Reduce Barriers

"The unsheltered homeless population was greatly impacted by COVID-19. In addition, they were asked to practice social distancing, wear a mask, and practice frequent washing of hands. Visualize an encampment site and being asked to do that…it's close to impossible."
— *Greater Greenville Mental Health staff member*

Many of the factors that contribute to causing homelessness are also the barriers individuals and families experience as they work to exit homelessness. The following graphic shows stakeholder responses to the negative and positive impact the pandemic had (and in many cases still has) on those experiencing homelessness outside the lack of available and affordable housing using categories established in the Report on Homelessness.

NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON BARRIERS TO EXITING HOMELESSNESS

Economic Factors

NEGATIVE
- Increase in prices
- Loss of jobs due to closing or fear of working
- Workforce shift/loss
- Lack of transportation further exacerbated by loss of workers and limits to riders

POSITIVE
- Ability for people to move to better jobs
- Increase in stimulus checks
- Pressure on employers to raise wages

Community/ Environment

NEGATIVE
- Transition to virtual learning removed school as a safe place for many children (meals, bathrooms, etc) and impacted learning
- Lack of Wifi and technology devices widened gap for access to education and services
- Lack of resources available for undocumented people
- Increase in food insecurity
- Loss of access to services due to facility closures or staff illness.

POSITIVE
- More opportunities for remote working
- Stronger relationships between partners

Lack of Family/Support Network   **Lack of Supportive Services**

NEGATIVE
- Complicated sick visits
- Difficultly finding testing for COVID
- High hospital bills
- Fear of pandemic
- Refusal to receive COVID vaccines
- Lost of connection to people
- Increase in mental health issues
- Lack of access to services- therapists, hospital, etc.
- Increased Stress (virtual school, doubling up, job loss, illness)
- Increased risk of DV and child abuse

POSITIVE
- Better access to testing and vaccines
- Increased connection to healthcare provider for many

Civil and Criminal Justice

NEGATIVE
- Division of races
- No visits for the incarcerated
- Incarcerated people were isolated for long periods of time and they were not allowed to work within the facilities.

POSITIVE
- Virtual/phone access increased for the incarcerated

Strengthen Coordinated Response

When looking at the system level response to COVID-19, frontline providers cited the key negative impacts of staffing shortages, initial lack of access to resources (personal protective equipment (PPE)/testing/vaccinations), and the need to provide services in a way that kept staff and clients safe. New collaborations between community partners, the heightened awareness of community needs, and the new influx of coordinated funding were cited as positive outcomes.

Mission Shift

At the height of COVID-19, many organizations saw a mission shift to meet the needs of Greenville County.

This shift in mission many times necessitated a shift in programming and processes as well, which led to rethinking service delivery. The migration to virtual visits and drive through services are examples of pandemic innovation that offered both positive and negative impacts.

> "The mission of the community is more important than an individual organization's mission,"
>
> — *United Ministries listening session participant*

"Telehealth visits offered innovative ways to manage vulnerable patients more effectively," according to New Horizon Healthcare for the Homeless staff.

A staff member at the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) Greenville shared, "Going virtual at the beginning of COVID-19 took our services, support groups, classes, and presentations to more people who were not able to participate in person for various reasons like childcare, transportation, and social anxiety. We still have those that don't want to come back in person."

For those without access to technology, virtual only options created greater disparity. Participants expressed concern that some agencies still aren't seeing people in person and require access to technology to utilize services.

Food pantries and hospital systems adopted drive-through options to safely offer access to food, testing, and vaccinations. This change limited residents without cars, and, in the case of food pantries, "limited in-person time with agency partners decreasing the opportunity for referrals to additional services."

While most program shifts were temporary, some organizations completely re-envisioned the services they were providing. For example, Buncombe Street UMC's crisis ministry moved from solely providing rent and utility financial assistance to offering case management. United Ministries Emergency Family Shelter, known as Interfaith Hospitality Network, reimagined partner congregation engagement and housing for families experiencing homelessness.

Participants believe some agencies continue to be in crisis mode – not fully opened, dealing with staffing shortages, etc. According to Philanthropy Today, nearly half of nonprofits across the country had 20% or more of their positions open in December 2021 and nearly a quarter of those responding either had waiting lists more than a month long or were not accepting new clients.

Strengthen Coordinated Response

Increased Community Collaboration and Funding

"More people were empowered by organizations putting resources together to share and communicate better." — *Community Fresh Start staff*

While these changes in programming were challenging, they also led to new collaborations in service delivery and funding. Creating a single entry point simplified the process for those in need of assistance. In addition to the United Way led COVID-19 Relief Fund effort, LiveWell coordinated food resources for the community communicating not only where food was available across the county but also identifying gaps that needed to be filled. Greenville County School District fed 75,000 remote students per day early in the pandemic. They worked with other community agencies like the YMCA to ensure that all students, including those living in motels, were being reached during the shelter in place mandate.

One cross-sector collaboration mentioned by listening session participants was Miracle Hill Ministries working with PRISMA, Bon Secours, City & County of Greenville, DHEC, Emergency Management, and other non-profit agencies to set up an interim quarantine site. Additionally, a process was established for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations for those experiencing homelessness in emergency shelters and unsheltered environments. This effort helped establish the groundwork for a more permanent quarantine emergency shelter and create protocols to prepare emergency shelters for future outbreaks.

The influx of federal funding for assistance to non-profits and individuals through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), stimulus checks, the Cares Act, and the American Rescue Plan were cited as both positive and negative factors of the pandemic. Listening session participants noted that resources helped individuals and families meet critical short term food and housing needs. However, they also noted that not addressing root issues with the funding, means the issues continue to exist.

One positive example mentioned was Greenville County's successful distribution of Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP 1) funding of more than $14 million to over 2,800 residents in 2021. Another positive example cited was the outreach plan created by the Greenville County Cares American Rescue Plan Partnership to ensure the second round of ERAP funds went to those in Greenville County that needed it most. Partnership member United Housing Connections (UHC) was awarded $12.5 million from Greenville County to fund the ERAP 2 Program. As of June 2022, UHC reported assisting 1080 households and distributing nearly $4 million in rent and utility assistance.

While some COVID-19 related funding has ended, there are still unspent funds at the county and state levels. There is also federal funding that may be reallocated to assist with housing and homelessness.

City & County of Greenville
Triune Mercy Center
Project Host
Hughes Library
Soteria

Handwashing stations are set-up to improve ability for those experiencing homelessness to stay healthy.

Project Host
Christ Church
LiveWell Greenville

Project Host fills meal gaps and collaborates for help for additional meals from Christ Church. LiveWell Greenville convenes food providers across Greenville and helps identify and fill areas of need.

GHA Partners
GHA Stakeholders
Elected Officials

GHA volunteers across geography and sectors offer time and resources to find creative solutions to challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness during COVID 19.

United Ministries
Triune Mercy Center
United Way of Greenville

United Ministries and Triune Mercy Center work with United Way to keep families, couples, and singles in place and safe with rent assistance.

Greenlink, the public transportation agency that serves Greenville County, experienced a major shift during the onset of COVID-19. In March of 2020, like many transit agencies across the country, Greenlink had to quickly develop policies and procedures to keep operators and passengers safe. Initially, Greenlink opted to provide fare-free rides and masks to help essential workers to get to work. During listening sessions, individuals with the experience of homelessness reported the benefit of having a mask provided for them by Greenlink when required to wear it to ride. A rear-door boarding policy was implemented in an attempt to reduce the face-to-face interaction with the bus operator. Passenger capacity was also limited to 10 people from the normal capacity of 32 to allow for social distancing. The limits imposed on the system meant that at times buses would have to pass potential passengers due to being at capacity.

As the pandemic continued, Greenlink implemented Operator Barriers – a physical barrier between the operator and passengers. This physical barrier allowed the transit system to transition away from rear-door boarding and eventually increase passenger capacity from 10 to back to 32. Listening session participants noted that many of the bus operators were victims of verbal and physical abuse because they attempted to enforce COVID-19 mandates such as social distancing and wearing a mask. Furthermore, Operators reported experiencing a sense of unappreciation and burnout due to long hours and increased responsibility caused by COVID-19.

Though intended to serve the community by providing a convenient way to get to work for free, Greenlink's fare-free policy only lasted for a short period. Because COVID-19 caused public spaces to be closed, limited seats were occupied by people experiencing homelessness who utilized the bus as a place to get out of the elements. Greenlink Director, James Keel, said, "Many of our essential workers couldn't make it to work on time because the buses they typically relied on for transportation to work were at maximum capacity and sometimes unsheltered people rode for the day because the buses were cool and it was just hot outside."

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, Greenlink continued supporting the community in innovative ways. They developed and implemented the location of social service organizations into their route map to help connect those in need with resources. Greenlink extended service hours during the week by four hours so that buses could operate from 5:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. As the pandemic closed down access to resources, Greenlink stepped in to help be a safe place for youth in crisis and victims of human trafficking. In January of 2021, Greenlink also assisted 61 people as a vital partner in the Greenville Homeless Alliance Motel Displacement Response Plan, when the Economy Inn was condemned.

Greenlink route map with social services organizations identified.

Keel reported Greenlink is currently straining to continue to provide on time transportation service due to the staffing shortages. Greenlink needs 41 full-time bus operators, but, at the time of this report, Greenlink only has 28 operators on the payroll. To help combat this need, Greenlink is offering free CDL training and a sign-on bonus in hopes of recruiting more people.

Impact Policymaking

The 2015 White Paper on Homelessness established the crucial role stakeholders have in advocating for the broader system-level changes that must occur. The Greenville Homeless Alliance stakeholders came together with advocacy that resulted in historic funding wins for local housing and transit dollars. However, as noted in the 2019 and 2021 Report on Homelessness in Greenville County, housing affordability and eviction rates have reached a crisis level, and people with the lowest incomes face the most significant challenge in finding and sustaining housing.

The five priorities in the 2019 Report on Homelessness in Greenville County led to a strategic plan and a policy agenda that were adopted during the pandemic. Both were utilized in the launching of the Advocacy Training Academy in October 2021. As the Greenville Homeless Alliance strives to be a collective voice for people experiencing homelessness and for those working to eliminate homelessness, the 2022 listening sessions provided an opportunity for both to weigh in on the advocacy priorities.

The Greenville Homeless Alliance's data and strategic direction facilitated the opportunity to collaborate with local partners as circumstances shifted in the early stages of the pandemic. The United Way of Greenville County convened partners, including the Greenville Homeless Alliance, to strengthen the advocacy for the eviction moratorium. As the moratorium came to an end, partners tracked data from the Princeton University Evictions Lab who found that new eviction filings in Greenville went from 98 in the first week of the pandemic to 403 new cases in the second week of September 2021.

Listening session participants were asked which of the following issue areas the Greenville Homeless Alliance should include in advocacy work for 2022-23. While all were included in the final ranking, advocacy for affordable housing, eviction prevention, and mental health services were the top three issue areas selected.

1. **Affordable housing** with rent or mortgage of $200 - $650/month; issues related to zoning to incentivize the inclusion of housing options in this range.
2. **Evictions** and access to legal representation for tenants.
3. Increased **mental health services** and expansion of permanent supportive housing.
4. **Affordable childcare options** that are accessible to parents experiencing homelessness or seeking to exit from emergency shelters.
5. Housing, workforce development, and fair chance hiring opportunities for **previously incarcerated residents.**
6. Funding for Greenlink's **Transit Development Plan** through 2023.
7. Supporting the SC Fair Lending Alliance to cap the interest rate at 36%
8. **Person-centered anti-camping and panhandling policies** to mitigate the increase in downtown development which geographically decentralizes the Greenville system, pushing people further out and creating more visibility of people living unsheltered.
9. Pursuing a **Homeless Court** to remove open and closed misdemeanor charges in order to improve a person's access to housing, employment, and other community resources.

What We Can Do

Our hope is that this supplementary brief will provide a better understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on those experiencing homelessness and the organizations and staff that serve them. Through this process, listening sessions and survey participants confirmed the need to continue focusing on the five priorities outlined in the 2021 Report on Homelessness (see pg.3 - 4).

Additionally, the following community strategies from the 2021 Report on Homelessness (see pg.32-33), align with the top areas of concern identified during listening sessions.

- Increase mental health services for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness and the frontline staff that serve them.

- Create housing and exits from homelessness for individuals, couples and families in the range of $250-$650/month for rent or mortgage.

- Advocacy and Collaboration:

  o Reduce barriers to housing like eviction.

  o Create opportunities for previously incarcerated residents to increase support for workforce development, fair chance hiring, and housing solutions.

  o Expand affordable childcare options to make daycare accessible for families who experience homelessness.

  o Support transit. Full funding of Greenlink's Transit Development Plan through 2023 will expand transit to meet the needs of residents in our growing economy.

Feedback from this report will be shared with Working Groups who are implementing the Greenville Homeless Alliance's Strategic Plan.

CREATING SYSTEM CHANGE

Systems change is about shifting the conditions that are holding a problem in place. Greenville Homeless Alliance Working Groups are strategically aligned to address the conditions (like policies, relationships & connections, and mental models) that impact the issue of homelessness.

The Greenville Homeless Alliance (GHA) is a coalition of partner organizations and individual stakeholders igniting change to address homelessness in Greenville County. Charged with looking for sustainable solutions to homelessness, the Greenville Homeless Alliance works to **educate, advocate, collaborate**, and **innovate** with policymakers and the community.

VISION: Safe, affordable homes for everyone in Greenville County

MISSION: To strengthen partnerships and broaden support in order to increase options for individuals or families who are experiencing homelessness and who are seeking stability and a safe, affordable home.

VALUES: Equity, Integrity, Inclusiveness, Pragmatism, and Courage

STEERING COMMITTEE

Lauren Stephens, Chair
The Salvation Army

Mary Kay Campbell, Vice-Chair
Greater Greenville Mental Health Center

Matthew Johnson, Treasurer
Matthew K. Johnson Law Firm, LLC

Brandon Cook, Secretary
New Horizon Family Health Services, Inc.

Nick Bush
United Ministries

Ryan Duerk
Miracle Hill Ministries

Bruce Forbes
Upstate Continuum of Care

Jennifer Fouse-Sheorn
Triune Mercy Center

Nalisha Henry
United Way of Greenville County

Kia Keyton
Greenville Technical College

Stacey Owens
SPINX

GHA is governed by a steering committee, which sets the strategic priorities, coordinates action, and ensures the financial and human resources to support the collective agenda are available. GHA uses the five key elements of the collective impact framework as a basis for partnership: a common agenda, common progress measures, coordination of mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and support of the partnership through **United Ministries** as the host organization. The **Community Foundation of Greenville** is the fiscal host.

We invite everyone in our community to become fiercely committed to ending homelessness and participate in creating a systemic and empathetic community-wide response to do so.

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Collective Statements Issued by the Greenville Homeless Alliance During COVID-19

The Greenville Homeless Alliance stands in solidarity with the families of George Floyd and so many other people of color who have died. These tragic and unnecessary deaths coupled with the COVID-19 crisis have further exposed the institutional and societal racism in this country.

One outcome of this systemic racism is the way homelessness disproportionately affects Black people in our community. Data from the 2019 Report on Homelessness in Greenville County show that Blacks account for 48% of the people experiencing homelessness in local emergency shelters, even though they represent only 18% of the population in Greenville County.

GHA, the backbone organization for the public and private partners committed to making homelessness brief and rare in Greenville County, advocates for equity as we strive to recognize and dismantle biases and discrimination in ourselves, our organizations, and our community. We know that our strength is in our diversity, and we honor the value of every human being.

If we want something different, we must do things differently. The issue of racial inequity cannot be solved by one group...or one race. It must be addressed by the entire community. The disparities are real. Two Greenvilles exist. We firmly believe that local, state, and federal policies can and should change. The missing piece is your voice and support. We ask you to share this message with your networks and join us as we do the work necessary to create a community where everyone belongs, everyone matters, everyone's life is valued, and no one is excluded.

Our hope is to see 2020 as a tipping point where we decide to stand shoulder to shoulder, with our arms locked against institutional racism and oppression, choosing to rebuild a community where everyone has a home.

In 2021, the Greenville Homeless Alliance Steering Committee and staff collectively wrote and adopted the following Race, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion statement.

To achieve our goal of making homelessness brief and rare, we must acknowledge the systemic issues that impact individuals experiencing homelessness. As partners who comprise the Greenville Homeless Alliance, we commit to:

- Educating and advocating in our community about systemic racism.

- Engaging in community conversations regarding racial inequities.

- Creating opportunities for and collaborating with Greenville residents to have shared experiences with those who are and have experienced homelessness.

- Encouraging and supporting an innovative community where diverse residents serve in leadership roles within organizations.

- Inviting and fostering open and honest conversations about race and difference.

We look forward to building relationships with our neighbors, including those experiencing homelessness, in this work to make Greenville a thriving place for all.

<u>APPENDIX</u>

Quotes and Observations from Listening Sessions/Surveys:

"My budget stayed the same, but prices are increasing." Triune Mercy Center parishioner

"Mental illness is real." United Ministries listening session

"Length of stay in our emergency shelter has increased due to the cost of housing and lack of affordable housing. We have increased services in all areas due to COVID-19 and have not reduced services in any capacity." The Salvation Army staff

"We are seeing an overwhelming increase of requests." Community Fresh Start staff

"We didn't address root issues with federal funding, so the issues are still here." United Ministries listening session

"Virtual meetings decreased barriers for kids wanting to participate in Pridelink programming." Pendleton Place staff

 "Some people never had a primary care provider, and they found a medical home for themselves or family members." Unity Health on Main staff

"There has been no real acknowledgment at a policy/government level or sometimes even social of the grief, stress, and anxiety that the pandemic caused and how that might impact people's ability to work, go to school, etc." Unity Health on Main staff

"We were all affected in some way by COVID. It did not discriminate." Greenville Reentry Coalition listening session

"A lot of people are still scared." Triune Mercy Center parishioner

"Revamping programs for the pandemic gave us program insight." United Ministries listening session

"Disruption of service from nonprofits resulted in homeless individuals having additional barriers to accessing services." Triune Mercy Center listening session

"Community providers lost volunteers limiting their ability to support those in need. This put greater pressure in many cases on existing staff." United Ministries listening session

"Many faith community and volunteers not yet fully returned." Triune Mercy Center listening session

"We are currently providing services at the same level that we were before COVID. We have added remote assistance via Zoom as an option for people who cannot travel to a library branch." Greenville County Library staff

"Some agencies still aren't seeing people in person." Triune Mercy Center listening session

"COVID-19 slowed us down, but it did not stop us." Project Care staff

"More people are seeking mental health services." Walt's Waltz staff

"Survivors are facing more dangerous and complex issues in their relationships. Safe Harbor has had to adapt all services for COVID safety (virtual services, utilizing hotels for shelter program, limiting bed space in shelters, etc.) Client barriers to achieving goals are higher. Finding affordable housing and getting approved for a lease is incredibly challenging for many survivors."   Safe Harbor staff

"We have seen larger numbers of beneficiaries seeking food service." Harvest Hope staff

"It has increased demand for services." Jasmine Road staff

"Federal funding shifted our missions, but it also let us try new collaborations. Now, however, we are having to find a way to provide new services without the federal funding." United Ministries listening session

The Greenville Homeless Alliance (GHA) would like to thank everyone who participated in the listening sessions, interviews, and completed surveys. Thanks also to all the groups and organizations that hosted listening sessions.

COVID-19 Listening Session Participant Organizations

Able SC
Alston Wilkes
Bon Secours
Buncombe Street UMC
Catholic Charities
Community Fresh Start
Daily Bread Ministries
Food Security Coalition, Emergency Food System
    Workgroup*
Furman University
Gateway House
Greater Greenville Mental Health
Greenlink
Greenville Chamber
Greenville County Library System
Greenville County School District
Greenville Reentry Coalition*
Greenville Tech
Greenville Tech Returning Citizens Center
Greer Relief
Habitat for Humanity
Harvest Hope
Hathaway Foundation
He Reigns Glory House Reentry House for Women
Hispanic Alliance
Jasmine Road
Lifeline Children's Services
LiveWell Greenville
Matthew K. Johnson Law Firm LLC
Mill Village Ministries
Miracle Hill Ministries
National Alliance on Mental Illness Greenville
New Horizon Family Health Services
NHE
Pendleton Place
Phoenix Center

PRISMA Health*
Project Care
Project Host
Root & Rebound
Safe Harbor
Salvation Army
SC Department of Commerce
SC Department of Correction
SC Dept. of Probation Parole and Pardons
SC Legal Services
SHARE
Soteria, CDC
Step by Step Ministry Hope Project
Sustaining Way
Team Co-Op
The Community Tap
The Greenville Housing Authority
The Period Project*
Triune Mercy Center*
United Housing Connections
United Ministries*
Unity Health On Main*
Upstate Circle of Friends
Upstate Continuum of Care
VA Medical Center
Walt's Waltz
YMCA
Individual and Retired Stakeholders
Individuals with the lived experience of
    homelessness or poverty.

* These groups/organizations hosted listening sessions. Additional sessions were held with the GHA Collaborate and Educate Working Groups.