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DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

# Strategic Framework to Make Homelessness Rare and Brief

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*Making homelessness rare and brief by June 2031.*

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City of Durham | Durham County | 2026–2031  
Prepared by the Durham Community Safety Department

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**Acknowledgments & Partners**

# A Note of Gratitude

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## Public Partners

The City of Durham and Durham County provided the governance commitments, funding, and operational coordination that anchor this framework.

## Anchor Partners

Duke University and Duke Health, Alliance Health, the A.J. Fletcher Foundation, and Community Solutions / Built for Zero contributed financial investments, methodological grounding, and/or continuous learning that shaped every part of this work.

## Provider Partners

Dozens of provider agencies and their staff carry out the day-to-day work of outreach, case management, housing placement, and stabilization across Durham. The framework's success depends entirely on their continued partnership and the sustained relationships between provider agencies, the backbone, and the people they serve. A special thanks to Housing for New Hope, Families Moving Forward, and Urban Ministries for their leadership and guidance on the Core Leadership Team.

## Peer City Partners

The Durham team has learned from peer city colleagues across the country — Atlanta, Charlotte, Cincinnati, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Greensboro, Hartford, Jacksonville, Minneapolis/Hennepin County, Nashville, Newark, Portland, Raleigh, Sacramento, San Diego, Seattle/King County, and the Gulf Coast Region of Mississippi — whose published experiences, direct conversations, and shared toolkits made this framework better than it would have been in isolation.

## People with Lived Experience of Homelessness

People with lived experience of homelessness in Durham shaped the design and decisions reflected in this framework. Their continued participation is the most important measure of whether the framework's design works for the people it is built to serve.

## Community Safety Department Staff

The HOPE team, the LIT Lab, the Familiar Neighbors program, and the Street Outreach team built the operational architecture this framework describes — and run it every day.

To everyone whose work this framework reflects — who has attended a case conferencing meeting, visited an encampment at 7 a.m., called a landlord at the eleventh hour, sat with a family while paperwork came together, or simply held the line on the conviction that this work is solvable: thank you. The work is yours as much as anyone's.

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**INTRODUCTION**

# An Opening Word

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## From the Community Safety Department

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This Strategic Framework represents a commitment to a specific, measurable goal: that by June 2031, homelessness in Durham will be rare and brief.

That goal is not abstract. It is anchored in a body of evidence from communities across the country that have proven homelessness is a solvable problem when a community decides to solve it. It is anchored in the people who experience homelessness in Durham. Their stories make clear what is at stake and what is possible. And it is anchored in the lived demonstration, here in Durham, that this approach works — in February 2026, a one-month sprint to house ten families ended with fifteen families housed, plus three more into non-congregate shelter.

The pages that follow lay out the strategy, the architecture, the operational functions, the investment, and the path. They are organized so that anyone reading this document — an elected official considering a budget, a Champion considering a commitment, a provider considering a referral, a resident wondering whether anything will change — can see, in concrete terms, what Durham intends to do and how.

This is a five-year framework. Its success will be measured year by year, by population, in numbers we will publish. The targets in Year 1 are ambitious. They are not promises; they are commitments. We will adjust as we learn. We will report what works and what does not. We will be honest about pace.

The question is no longer whether homelessness in Durham can be ended. The question is how fast and how broad. This document is our answer.

Thank you to every partner whose work made this framework possible — the City of Durham, Durham County, Duke University and Duke Health, Alliance Health, the A.J. Fletcher Foundation, the Durham Housing Authority, Durham Public Schools, Housing for New Hope, Families Moving Forward, Urban Ministries, and the dozens of provider agencies, advocates, and people with lived experience who have shaped this framework.

The work begins now.

**IN BRIEF**

# Executive Summary

## The Framework at a Glance

By June 2031, Durham will make homelessness rare and brief. That is the North Star of this Strategic Framework — a five-year, cross-sector plan formed in partnership between government agencies, homelessness providers, and cross-sector partners to build a system that prevents homelessness from happening, ends it quickly when it does, and ensures it does not recur.

## Year 1 Targets

By June 2027, Durham will measurably reduce homelessness across three high-priority populations:

- 30% reduction in unsheltered homelessness
- 30% reduction in veteran homelessness
- 50% reduction in youth and young adult homelessness

## Why This Will Work

Three things have changed.

First, the evidence is in. Communities using the Built for Zero methodology have demonstrated that homelessness is a solvable system problem, not a permanent feature of urban life. Fourteen unique U.S. communities historically reached Built for Zero's functional-zero milestone for veteran and/or chronic homelessness; Built for Zero now uses a broader verified-reductions framework to track whether homelessness is becoming rare, brief, nonrecurring, safe, and believable.

Second, Durham has proven it works here. In February 2026, a 25-day housing sprint that targeted ten families ended with fourteen families housed and three more into non-congregate shelter — a proof of concept for what real units, real money, and real case management produce when aligned around real households with a deadline.

Third, the partners are aligned. To move forward with the initial strategic planning process, the City and County committed funding. Duke committed funding. The A.J. Fletcher Foundation committed funding. Five major Durham institutions—the City, the County, Duke, Alliance Health, Housing for New Hope, Families Moving Forward, and Urban Ministries—sat at a leadership table together for many months to align and deepen commitment to a shared vision. The year ahead calls for even further commitment: a \$5 million private community investment campaign anchors a Year 1 budget of approximately \$13 million in new investments.

## How the Framework Is Built

The framework rests on six interlocking operational functions — Street Outreach and Coordinated Entry, Case Conferencing, the Flexible Housing Assistance Fund, Landlord Engagement, Housing Stabilization Case Management, and Housing Sprints. These interlocking operational functions are anchored by a clearly defined implementation structure: a Champions Table for strategic leadership; a Continuum of Care Governing Board (formerly HSAC) whose governance, funding, and compliance authority is limited to HUD-funded programs and related HUD requirements; an Executive Table for homelessness system alignment and pathway clearing; the Community Safety Department as backbone agency; Durham County as implementation partner; and Improvement Teams, case conferencing tables, and Communities of Practice for frontline operational work.

The pages that follow describe each of these in detail.

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**PART ONE**

# The Vision

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## The North Star

By June 2031, Durham will make homelessness rare and brief.

Rare means few people enter homelessness each month. Brief means those who do exit quickly into stable housing. Together, the two conditions describe a functional-zero system condition — a state in which homelessness is the exception, not a forced way of life.

A functional-zero condition is not zero on any given night. It is a system condition: the number of people experiencing homelessness in a population is consistently fewer than the number the system can house each month. When that condition holds, homelessness becomes a temporary disruption from which people recover — not an ongoing experience. Durham uses this concept as a local strategic aim that emphasizes verified reductions in homelessness.

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## Year 1 Targets

The five-year arc rests on concrete annual reductions, beginning with Year 1 (FY 2027):

- 30% reduction in unsheltered homelessness by June 30, 2027
- 30% reduction in veteran homelessness by June 30, 2027
- 50% reduction in youth and young adult homelessness by June 30, 2027

These targets translate to specific by-name list reductions that the system tracks monthly and reports publicly. Subsequent years carry targets for additional populations, including chronic homelessness and families, with the trajectory designed to compound progress year over year toward the 2031 North Star.

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## The Proof Point: February 2026

In February 2026, a winter storm displaced ten families to hotel rooms paid for through Durham’s White Flag emergency response. Families Moving Forward, Durham’s only family emergency shelter, was at full capacity. Without intervention, the families would have cycled into longer homelessness once the storm passed.

The Community Safety Department, in partnership with Housing for New Hope, Families Moving Forward, and the City of Durham, organized a 25-day sprint. The goal: house ten families before the City’s White Flag hotel funding ended.

# 15

families housed during the February 2026 sprint, against a goal of 10 — plus three more transitioned into non-congregate shelter.

The sprint worked because every component the system needed showed up at the same time, around the same households, with a deadline. Housing for New Hope administered flexible payments — application fees, arrears, security deposits, landlord incentives — within one business day of complete documentation. Housing locators identified units and presented multiple options. Case managers from Families Moving Forward and the Community Safety Department focused conversations on housing rather than barriers. Daily coordination among the City, the County, and providers cleared stuck cases in hours, not weeks.

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The February sprint is the proof of concept that the Strategic Framework’s approach works in Durham. The question this Framework answers is how to make that approach the way the system always works — not the exception when conditions force it.

## What Success Looks Like

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By June 2031, a Durham resident in a housing crisis will be reached within days of becoming unsheltered or calling for help. They will have a clear, predictable path to housing rather than a waitlist. They will move into housing in weeks, not months. They will have case management focused on long-term stability for the year that follows.

A landlord considering whether to rent to a participating household will know that rent will arrive on time and in full each month, that a real human will answer the phone if something goes wrong, and that the financial risk of accepting a participating tenant is shared, not absorbed.

A provider working in the system will know that their work is part of a coordinated effort, not a constellation of disconnected programs; that the data and tools they need are available and accurate; and that the barriers they surface get cleared at the system level rather than worked around case by case.

That is the city this framework is designed to build.

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**PART TWO**

# The Strategy

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## From Managing Homelessness to Ending It

For decades, American homelessness response has been organized around managing homelessness — providing shelter, meals, and outreach as ongoing services for a population presumed to be permanent. Programs were measured by units of service delivered. Coordination across providers was optional. The by-name list was a document, not a discipline.

Durham’s Strategic Framework rejects that premise. The framework is organized around ending homelessness for each person who experiences it — moving them into housing as quickly as the system can produce a unit, supporting them through the months immediately after, and ensuring that the conditions that led them to homelessness do not repeat.

The shift in framing is real, and the words follow it. Case management is housing-focused. Outreach is paired with a by-name list. Funding is flexible. Meetings are action-oriented. None of these are slogans — they are organizing concepts borrowed from a methodology that has helped multiple U.S. communities historically reach functional-zero milestones and now supports verified population-level reductions.

## The Built for Zero Approach

Built for Zero is Community Solutions’ national initiative supporting 140+ communities working to make homelessness rare and brief. Durham is a participating community. The methodology rests on four operating ideas:

Count every person experiencing homelessness in real time. The by-name list — updated weekly, drawn from HMIS, and segmented by population — is the operational truth of the system. Decisions are made from it, not in spite of it.

Set population-specific reduction goals. Vague systemic targets do not move budgets. “30 percent reduction in veteran homelessness by June 2027” moves budgets.

Focus on system improvement, not program management. Stuck cases are signals about the system, not failures of clients. Recurring barriers mean the workflow needs to change.

Sequence resources around people. Most homelessness ends when housing assistance, a unit, and case management arrive at the same person at the same time. The framework’s job is to make that sequencing routine, not exceptional.

## Populations of Focus

Year 1 prioritizes four populations:

Unsheltered individuals — homelessness often experienced in encampments and outdoor settings, with a Year 1 target of 30 percent reduction.

Veterans — continued reduction toward a rare, brief, and nonrecurring system condition, utilizing national VASH and SSVF programs, with a Year 1 target of 30 percent reduction.

Youth and young adults — specialized sprint cohorts and developmentally appropriate placements, with a Year 1 target of 50 percent reduction.

Families — building on the February 2026 sprint, with continued partnership between provider agencies, the Community Safety Department, and the housing system.

Chronic homelessness, single adults, and households fleeing domestic violence are served through the standing case conferencing tables, with potential population-specific sprints scheduled into the Year 1 calendar.

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## The Operational System

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The strategy unfolds through six interlocking operational functions. Each has its own discipline, contracts, and metrics — but they are designed to work as one system.

- **Street Outreach and Coordinated Entry.** The front door. Reaches unsheltered neighbors quickly, verifies homelessness, and routes people onto the by-name list.
- **Case Conferencing.** The operational engine of the by-name list. Where providers meet weekly to take one meaningful step for every neighbor toward housing.
- **Flexible Housing Assistance Fund.** The financial infrastructure that ensures there are enough funds to quickly house people experiencing homelessness—and ensures that payments move at the speed of opportunity.
- **Landlord Engagement.** The unit pipeline. Recruits, supports, and retains property owners who choose to rent to households exiting homelessness.
- **Housing Stabilization Case Management.** The 12-month arc that bridges the gap between move-in and long-term stability.
- **Housing Sprints.** Time-bound, 4-6 week pushes that synthesize all of the above around a defined cohort with a deadline.

Part Four describes each of these in detail.

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**PART THREE**

# How We're Organized

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## Implementation Architecture

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A five-year strategic framework only works if the structure underneath it can execute, learn, and adjust. Durham's implementation architecture separates strategic direction-setting, HUD-funded program governance/funding/compliance, day-to-day coordination, and frontline action — each with a defined role, none doing the others' work.

Six bodies make the work happen:

- **The Champions Table** — cross-sector leadership for strategic direction and barrier-clearing.
- **The CoC Governing Board** — governance, funding prioritization, and compliance authority for HUD-funded homelessness programs and related HUD requirements only.
- **Executive Table** — Ensures alignment across the homelessness system, provides strategic feedback, and identifies areas in need of improvement.
- **The Community Safety Department** — the day-to-day backbone carrying out the City of Durham's CoC Lead Agency function.
- **Durham County** — implementation partner, upstream of homelessness.

Improvement Teams, Case Conferencing Tables, Communities of Practice — frontline learning and operational coordination.

Lived Experience Advisory Group — centering lived expertise and providing guidance and input on the housing process.

Each body does what only it can do, and no body carries weight that belongs somewhere else.

## Strategic Leadership: The Champions Table

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The Champions Table is a small, cross-sector leadership body of 11–13 members appointed by the City and County. Its function is path-clearing — using its members' authority, networks, and access to resources to remove barriers that no single agency can move on its own.

Champions represent the sectors whose decisions shape Durham's housing market and homelessness response: Duke Health, Alliance Health, the Durham Housing Authority, business, philanthropy, the CoC Governing Board, technology, real estate, faith, schools, a City of Durham elected official, and a Durham County elected official.

Champions are working leaders, not advisors. They are asked to:

- Endorse and champion the framework publicly and within their sectors.
- Clear barriers and align resources across institutions, agencies, and funding streams.
- Provide accountability by reviewing real-time data and pressing on progress.
- Advise the backbone and elected leaders as conditions evolve and the strategy iterates.

The Champions Table will meet approximately every six-to-eight weeks. It will be coordinated by the Community Safety Department as backbone. Members commit to two to three path-clearing actions per year that only their authority or network can unlock.

## HUD-Funded Program Governance: The CoC Governing Board

Through a new Interlocal Agreement between the City and the County, replacing the 2012 ILA, the Homeless Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) may be reconstituted as the Continuum of Care Governing Board for the Durham City and County Continuum of Care (NC-502).

The new Governing Board will have 13 voting members organized by sector: four institutional seats (City of Durham, Durham County, Durham Housing Authority, Durham Public Schools), four sector seats (business, homelessness service provider, public safety agency, person with lived experience), and five at-large seats. Members serve three-year terms with a two-term maximum and a one-year cooling-off period.

The Board's formal governance, funding, and compliance authority is limited to HUD-funded homelessness programs and related HUD requirements. Its scope includes HEARTH Act/CoC Program oversight, HMIS oversight, the annual Point-in-Time Count, Coordinated Entry and written standards where required by HUD, and review and approval of the HUD CoC Consolidated Application. The Board does not govern non-HUD local, county, philanthropic, or institutional investments in the Strategic Framework. Strategic direction and operational improvement live in the Champions Table, Executive Table, and the frontline bodies, respectively.

## The Backbone, the County, and the Frontline Bodies

### *The Community Safety Department as Backbone*

The City of Durham is the Lead Agency for the Continuum of Care; the Durham Community Safety Department carries out that function on behalf of the City and serves as the day-to-day backbone for framework implementation. As backbone, DCSD leads operations across the framework, manages communications, coordinates across improvement teams and case conferencing tables, and facilitates groups for action.

DCSD's organizational structure is built around two HOPE Manager functions — Housing Placement and Data, Systems, and Strategy — supporting an Assistant Director and Director. A separate Unsheltered Approach Lead reports directly to the Assistant Director.

### *Durham County as Implementation Partner*

Durham County is co-investor and implementation partner, particularly upstream of homelessness. The County operates the Department of Social Services, behavioral health partnerships through Alliance Health, prevention resources, and justice diversion programs — the systems that most directly shape inflow into homelessness. County participation is essential not just to funding but to preventing crises before they reach the homelessness response system.

### *Improvement Teams, Case Conferencing Tables, and Communities of Practice*

Three frontline bodies do the operational work.

Improvement Teams are system-focused groups that test process and policy changes. They are where recurring barriers surfaced in case conferencing get redesigned into new workflows.

Case Conferencing Tables are population-specific recurring meetings — veterans, chronic, families, general/non-chronic — where providers coordinate housing placements for individual neighbors on the by-name list.

Communities of Practice are affinity-based groups (e.g., housing locators, outreach workers, case managers) that build shared capability across agencies.

### *The Executive Roundtable and the Lived Experience Advisory Group*

The Executive Roundtable convenes the Executive Directors of provider agencies on a recurring basis for collaboration, input, and rapid mobilization during sprints. The Executive Table will discuss alignment on the strategic framework, provide input on areas of improvement, and lead the homelessness system towards functional zero.

The Lived Experience Advisory Group centers people with lived experience of homelessness in system design, decision-making, and accountability — ensuring that the framework's most important measure of success is whether it works for the people it is built to serve.

## PART FOUR

# How the Work Gets Done

The framework's six operational functions are described below. Each has its own discipline, but all are designed to work as one system, sequenced around the same households at the same time.

## Street Outreach and Coordinated Entry

The front door of the homelessness response system. Street Outreach reaches unsheltered neighbors where they are, builds rapport, verifies homelessness, and connects them to housing pathways. Coordinated Entry organizes those connections — maintaining the by-name list, administering the Housing Barriers Assessment, and routing people to the right resource at the right time.

### Key Elements

- **Multiple referral pathways.** Self-initiated by Street Outreach staff during encampment outreach; community partner referrals via Durham One Call, Neighborhood Improvement Services, and Entry Point; internal referrals from other DCSD programs; and direct requests from City and County leadership.
- **Defined contact standards.** First contact within one business day of referral assignment (two-day minimum standard); six in-person attempts within two weeks, supplemented by Community Response Team backup and a department-wide BOLO message, before a case closes for non-contact.
- **A three-phase engagement model.** Outreach (rapport building and homelessness verification), Engagement (Housing Barriers Assessment, HMIS project start, monthly current living situation updates), and Case Management (housing-focused goal setting, weekly contact, and referral to housing through Coordinated Entry).
- **Single Coordinated Entry administrator.** All housing referrals — to HSCM, the Flexible Housing Assistance Fund, and other system resources — originate from the Coordinated Entry Administrator, ensuring referrals match by-name list priority and policy rather than agency-level allocation.

Street Outreach and Coordinated Entry are the front door. They determine who is on the by-name list, where they are, and how the system reaches them.

## Case Conferencing

The recurring, multi-agency meeting where the by-name list becomes action. Case conferencing is where providers come together to take one meaningful step for every neighbor on the list — organized around action, not around updates.

### Key Elements

- **Population-segmented meetings.** Recurring meetings organized by population — veterans, chronically homeless neighbors, families, and general/non-chronic — so the right providers are in the room for the right cases. In-person at least monthly per population.
- **The Learning Loop, per client.** For each name discussed: state the client and time on the list; ask what action has been taken since last meeting; name the largest system barrier this week; record a new next step with owner and due date; set or update a target move-in date. Two to three minutes per client.
- **Target move-in dates as the operational discipline.** Every client matched to a resource has a predicted move-in date. Missed dates are treated as system learning opportunities, not staff judgments.
- **Trained facilitation and meeting jobs.** HOPE team staff facilitate, trained in Built for Zero facilitation tools. Rotating facilitator, scribe, and timekeeper roles. A pre-meeting prep routine: clean the BNL three days out, share updates two days out, draft the agenda one day out.

- **Feedback loop to leadership.** Recurring barriers and stuck cases roll up to the Champions Table, the Executive Table, and Improvement Teams for path-clearing.

Case conferencing is the operational layer where the by-name list becomes action. It is where the system holds itself accountable for moving each person on the list toward housing.

## Flexible Housing Assistance Fund

The financial infrastructure that lets Durham's system act when opportunity opens. Households exit homelessness in moments — when a landlord says yes, when an arrears amount gets cleared, when a security deposit lands on time. The Flexible Housing Assistance Fund is designed to move at the speed of those moments.

### Key Elements

- **Centralized fiscal administration.** A single entity manages and disburses flexible housing funds in the system, eliminating duplication and giving every provider one familiar workflow.
- **A pre-approved menu of allowable costs.** Some examples include application fees, arrears, holding fees, security deposits, landlord incentives, moving expenses, utility deposits and payments, hotel placements when no shelter is available, renter's insurance, and risk-mitigation reserves.
- **Speed standards.** Funds disbursed within one business day of complete documentation. Utility payments aligned to landlord billing cycles. No late fees absorbed by participants.
- **Rental assistance via HAP contracts.** Direct deposit to landlords on the 1st of each month, with tenants contributing income-adjusted portions and a progressive payment model designed to transfer full rent responsibility to the household within 12 months.
- **Risk-mitigation reserves.** Up to two months' rent in documented damage coverage, with the unit made available to another household exiting homelessness if mitigation funds are used.
- **Single point of entry.** Referrals come exclusively from the Coordinated Entry Administrator, ensuring equitable access and alignment with the by-name list.

When money moves at the speed of opportunity, more people get housed.

## Landlord Engagement

The unit pipeline. Durham's Strategic Framework only works if there are units to move people into. Landlord Engagement is how the system builds and sustains that supply — by recruiting property owners, making the partnership worth their while, and supporting them through every lease.

### Key Elements

- **A dedicated owner support team.** Staff based in Durham serving as the consistent point of contact for landlords — handling lease-up logistics, renewals, damage claims, rent reasonableness, and payment changes.
- **A specialized listing platform.** Owner-facing software where landlords list available units, signal their willingness to accept rental assistance, and give case managers a coordinated view of inventory.
- **Reliable, on-time rental assistance.** Rent paid in full each month through HAP contracts administered by the Flexible Housing Assistance Fund administrator.
- **Risk mitigation.** Damage coverage and vacancy-loss protection that reduces the financial exposure landlords face when they take a chance on a household with a complicated rental history. The single most important conversion lever.
- **Onboarding and ongoing training.** Twice-yearly landlord orientation (online and recorded), training and technical assistance for case managers and housing locators, and program briefings for household entering the system.
- **Performance accountability.** A Year 1 target of 500 leased units by June 30, 2027, tracked monthly with progress reporting tied to provider compensation.

The offer to landlords has to be better than the alternative. Durham’s design rests on three guarantees: rent on time, a real human on the phone, and shared risk — not absorbed risk.

## Housing Stabilization Case Management

Getting a household into a unit is the first step. Keeping them housed once the subsidy ends is the goal. Housing Stabilization Case Management (HSCM) bridges that gap, providing intensive, time-limited support during the months when households are most likely to succeed if helped and most likely to return to homelessness if not.

### Key Elements

- **A 12-month, phased arc.** Durham adapts the Critical Time Intervention (CTI) model — a time-limited, phased approach commonly delivered over approximately nine months — into a 12-month stabilization arc: Engagement and Assessment, Transition (Months 1–3 high touch), Try-Out (Months 4–8 stepping back), Transfer (Months 9–12 to natural supports), plus a Durham-added Month 13 Readiness phase that makes the handoff off subsidy a planned step rather than a cliff.
- **Three stabilization goals.** Income generation, budget discipline, and the activation of natural supports — the three factors most predictive of whether housing holds once subsidy ends.
- **A Housing Plan as the operational anchor.** Each session organized around a written plan with monthly budget, housing history review, time-bound income strategy, and a documented path to assuming 100% of rent by Month 12.
- **Multiple providers, one model.** Capacity distributed across agencies for resilience and reach, but every provider operates from the same policies, documentation requirements, and fidelity expectations.
- **Single point of entry.** Referrals come exclusively from the Coordinated Entry Administrator, ensuring HSCM resources are matched to households on the by-name list.

Most evictions back into homelessness happen in the 6–24 months after a housing exit. A 12-month case management arc — followed by a Month 13 readiness check — is designed to catch failure points before they become evictions.

## Housing Sprints and Interim Housing

A normal-paced system produces normal-paced results. Housing Sprints are how Durham accelerates throughput on a defined population, in a defined place, against a defined target — by pulling the system’s existing assets into focused coordination around a specific list of households over 4-6 weeks. Interim housing—like hotel rooms, pallet sites, and travel trailers—fills the bridge between street and permanent housing.

### Key Elements

- **A defined cohort and timeline.** Each sprint targets a specific population — families, veterans, an encampment — with a date by which they will be housed. The February 2026 family sprint targeted 10 households in 25 days and housed 14, plus three more into non-congregate shelter.
- **Pre-approved fiscal agility via the Flexible Housing Assistance Fund.** Application fees, arrears, holding fees, security deposits, landlord incentives, and moving expenses pre-cleared so payments move within one business day. No committee delays.
- **Landlord engagement at velocity.** The Owner Support Team activates in real time, with housing locators presenting 2–3 unit options per household and W-9s collected up front.
- **Case management from day one through Month 13.** Each participant signs a participation agreement and begins a Housing Plan during the sprint, transitioning to their assigned HSCM provider for the 12-month arc.
- **Daily coordination, intensified case conferencing.** Case conferencing intensifies from weekly to daily or near-daily, with the Learning Loop as the discipline. Stuck cases escalate within hours.
- **Interim housing as bridge capacity.** Hotel rooms, motel rooms, and other temporary placements provide safe, dignified interim shelter while permanent housing is identified.

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Sprints make the system act like a system. Each successful sprint is a proof point that the work is solvable and a learning opportunity that sharpens the system before the next push.

**PART FIVE**

# Investment, Accountability, and Learning

## Year 1 Investment

The framework’s Year 1 budget represents approximately \$13 million in new investments, anchored by City and County commitments and a \$5 million private community investment campaign. The investments fund the operational functions described in Part Four:

- **\$9 million Flexible Housing Assistance and Interim Housing Fund** — the rental assistance, risk mitigation, and interim housing capacity that move households from the street and into stability.
- **\$1.25 million Housing Stabilization Case Management** — distributed across providers to deliver the 12-month CTI-based arc plus Month 13 Readiness.
- **\$1.2 million Inflow reduction** — upstream prevention work, diversion, and the interventions that keep households from becoming homeless in the first place.
- **\$950,000 Backbone staffing** — the Community Safety Department capacity needed to coordinate the system, manage data, and run the case conferencing engine.
- **\$400,000 Landlord Engagement** — the dedicated owner support team and listing platform that build and sustain the unit pipeline.
- **\$325,000 Technical assistance** — Built for Zero coaching, technical assistance support, and the capacity-building investments that make the methodology work in Durham.

Below, please find a chart outlining new budget asks by source.

### FY27 New Budget Asks: Approx. \$13M

Funding Area	Amount	%	City	County	Community
Public-Private Flexible Housing Assistance + Interim Housing Fund	\$9,000,000	70%	\$2M*	\$2M*	\$5M
System-wide Case Management	\$1,250,000	10%	\$1.25M		
Inflow Reduction Strategies	\$1,200,000	9%		\$1.2M	
City + County Staffing to support strategic implementation	\$950,000	7%	\$820K	\$130K	
Technical Assistance	\$325,000	2%	\$108K	\$108K	\$108K
Additional Unit Recruitment, Connection and Retention Service	\$300,000	2%	\$300K		

*The above would represent new investments above current commitments by City & County.*

*\* Note: \$1M of both City and County’s commitment to the flexible fund could be structured as a matching challenge.*

The City plans to continue funding for White Flag, Coordinated Entry, landlord engagement, HMIS, and street outreach.

The public-private model is intentional. Public funding provides the operating floor; private community investment provides the agility, the proof of confidence from the community’s anchor institutions, and the capacity to act on opportunities that public funding cycles do not accommodate.

## Measuring What Matters

The framework will be measured against three categories of metrics, published monthly and reviewed by the Champions table.

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## System Outcomes

The One Number — total households actively experiencing homelessness in Durham, by population, drawn from the by-name list and reported monthly.

Inflow — new households entering homelessness each month, by population and pathway.

Outflow — households exiting to permanent housing each month, by population and destination.

Length of time homeless — median and average days from system entry to housing placement, by population.

Returns to homelessness — households returning to the by-name list within 24 months of a permanent housing exit.

## Operational Performance

Case conferencing effectiveness — percentage of clients with target move-in dates set, percentage moved in by their target date, and percentage of next-step commitments completed week over week.

Flexible Housing Assistance Fund turnaround — average and median days from complete-documentation submission to payment disbursement.

Landlord engagement — leased units by month, total units in the network, and tenant retention rates.

HSCM retention — households in HSCM, completing the 12-month arc, and remaining housed at Month 13 readiness.

## Equity and Voice

Disaggregated outcomes — system outcomes broken out by race, ethnicity, gender, age, and household composition to surface disparities for action.

Lived experience input — systematic input from people in and exiting the system, with the Lived Experience Advisory Group as the formal channel for system design feedback.

## Cities We've Learned From

Durham has not built this framework in isolation. Over the past year, the Community Safety Department and Continuum of Care have engaged directly with peer cities, participated in two Built for Zero national convenings, and absorbed lessons from the broader Built for Zero network of 140+ communities.

### Direct Peer Engagement

Peer cities with whom Durham has engaged with and learned from include Atlanta (Downtown Rising and the World Cup zone-by-zone approach), Cincinnati (mental-health-board-funded BID outreach), Denver (the most-studied national case, with a 60% unsheltered reduction over two and a half years), Detroit, Jacksonville, Minneapolis/Hennepin County, Nashville, Newark, Portland, Sacramento, and San Diego.

Durham has worked closely with regional and topical peers, including Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh, Dallas (Housing Forward backbone model), and the Gulf Coast Region of Mississippi (Built for Zero proof point outside major-metro contexts).

### Learning at a Distance

Durham has also studied two communities through their published experiences. Hartford, Connecticut's Zero Inflow Project — Community Solutions' upstream prevention work in two North Hartford zip codes — informs Durham's prevention thinking and approach to cross-sector engagement with health systems. King County, Washington's regional consolidation under the King County Regional Homelessness Authority is a studied case in regional homelessness governance, both for its design choices and the implementation challenges that have followed.

### The National Network

Durham is a participating community in Built for Zero, Community Solutions' national initiative whose theory of change draws on work with over 140 communities. The methodology, toolkits, and peer-learning convenings provide a constant feedback loop. Community Safety Department staff attended the Built for Zero Fall Learning Session in November 2025

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in Denver, which provided much of the methodological grounding now reflected in Durham’s case conferencing redesign, by-name list strategy, and Year 1 sprint structure.

## Storytelling and Communications

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A strategy that works can still fail if no one believes it is working. Durham’s framework includes a deliberate communications and storytelling discipline designed to build public confidence as the work produces results.

### What the Public Is Watching For

Polling from Built for Zero cities — Denver, Atlanta, San Diego — reveals a consistent pattern. Homelessness, housing, and affordability are the top three issues in most American cities. Most people believe homelessness can be reduced. Most people are skeptical of media reports and government claims and want to see visible progress with their own eyes. Messages emphasizing safety land with homeowners; messages emphasizing thriving cities and shared prosperity land with renters. Criminalization is not a popular solution. People are willing to support new investment, but they have to overcome mistrust about whether local government can use resources well and deliver results.

### Three Storytelling Principles

Real-time, not retrospective. The story is told as the work happens — every sprint, every landlord onboarded, every household housed — not in annual reports after the fact.

Shared, not single-voice. A single agency’s claim of progress lands as institutional self-interest. The same claim, made by a bank executive, a hospital leader, a school principal, a Champion, a person with lived experience, and an elected official, together, builds confidence. The framework’s communications strategy is designed to produce that common choir of voices.

Specific, not abstract. “Reducing veteran homelessness by 30 percent” beats “investing in better outcomes.” A household’s first-day-in-housing photo beats a chart.

### What Durham Will Publish

A monthly public dashboard with the by-name list count, inflow, outflow, and length of time homeless, by population.

Sprint reports after each housing sprint, with cohort outcomes, what worked, what didn’t, and what changed for the next push.

An annual report against the Year 1 targets and beyond, written for the public rather than the federal grant cycle.

A story stream — regular short narratives from the work, designed for use by local media, Champions, and partner organizations in their own communications.

### Reaching the Movable Middle

Durham’s communications strategy is designed to reach the movable middle — residents who are not the loudest critics or the most committed supporters of homelessness work, but the larger middle whose confidence determines public support over time. That audience needs to see progress; real people housed rather than statistics in aggregate; concrete change in their own neighborhood, not abstract system rhetoric; and trusted voices outside government making the case. The framework’s communications discipline is built to produce these inputs continuously rather than seasonally.

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**PART SIX**

# The Path Forward

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This Strategic Framework is the beginning of a five-year arc, not the end of a planning process. The work of implementation — the case conferencing meetings, the housing sprints, the budget cycles, the policy changes that surface from Improvement Teams — is the work that will close the gap between the framework on the page and the city it describes.

By June 2031, Durham will make homelessness rare and brief. Year by year, we will report what worked, what didn't, what changed, and what comes next.

## The Trajectory

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Year 1 (FY 2027) — 30% reduction in unsheltered homelessness, 30% in veteran homelessness, 50% in youth and young adult homelessness. The operational system stands up; the Champions Table convenes; the CoC Governing Board transitions from HSAC; the first dedicated unsheltered sprint runs and scales to two additional areas by December.

Years 2–3 — deepening operational fidelity, broadening population focus to chronic and family homelessness with population-specific reduction targets, expanding the unit pipeline through landlord engagement at scale, and demonstrating the public-private investment model is sustainable beyond Year 1.

Years 4–5 — verified rare, brief, and nonrecurring conditions for veteran homelessness and chronic homelessness; system-wide reductions in length of time homeless and returns to homelessness; sustained inflow reduction through upstream prevention work with health systems, the County, schools, and the justice system.

## How to Engage

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This framework belongs to Durham — to the City, the County, the institutions that have committed, the providers who do the work, the people with lived experience whose voices guide it, and the residents who will hold it accountable. Engagement happens at every level:

- **Sector leaders** — join or champion the work through the Champions Table.
  - **Provider agencies** — participate in case conferencing, the Executive Roundtable, and Communities of Practice.
  - **People with lived experience** — join the Lived Experience Advisory Group and shape system design.
  - **Property owners** — join the landlord network and become part of the unit pipeline.
  - **Funders and philanthropic partners** — contribute to the \$5 million community investment campaign and/or align grants to the framework's populations and operational functions.
  - **Residents and neighbors** — champion this work to your friends and family, contribute to the Flexible Housing Assistance Fund, and take part in the public conversation about what kind of city Durham is becoming.
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