



News from the
City Communications Office

City of Kansas City, Missouri
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Land Bank Dollar Sale, new Housing Department highlight City's commitment to helping unhoused persons

Long-term solutions will help KCMO's most vulnerable residents

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The Land Bank will soon be helping provide homes for those who are unhoused or at-risk of becoming homeless.

Properties would be sold for \$1 provided that the new property owners fully rehabilitate the property, eliminate all blight, and provide housing to the homeless and to individuals who make \$18,000 annual income or less, or families who make 30% or less of the federal guide to annual median income.

“This is part of our work to provide long-term and affordable solutions for those experiencing homelessness and those in need of affordable housing,” said City Manager Brian Platt. “This initiative will dramatically increase our affordable housing supply and focuses on the most vulnerable families in our community.”

The next step in this process is community outreach to neighborhoods where

current Land Bank properties exist and to finalize the specific details of the program with council and community input. This includes a community meeting on April 1 at 6 pm. Details are available on the Land Bank website at kcmolandbank.org The City owns over 100 vacant homes at the Land Bank.

The City is also seeking to build additional affordable housing units on the Barney Allis Plaza site. The significant reconstruction project for the parking facility provides an opportunity to include additional community benefits such as affordable apartments, ground floor retail, and a public plaza. The design phase of this project will soon be underway.

The City Council is debating legislation that would establish a Housing Department, which will create new staff positions to focus on affordable housing, homelessness, and tenants' rights and advocacy.

“The imminent Land Bank sales of more than 100 vacant homes throughout Kansas City is one of many solutions Kansas City government is pursuing to increase Kansas City’s housing stock, so that all families may have equitable access to safe and affordable housing, including those experiencing homelessness during this pandemic,” said Mayor Quinton Lucas. “Paired with several other initiatives — including our recently-passed housing set-aside ordinance, working to grow our Housing Trust Fund, standing up a new Kansas City Housing Department, and fully funding the Office of the Tenant Advocate — this is an important step to meet the housing needs of our community.

"I will continue working with my Council colleagues and the City Manager to ensure Kansas City is an affordable and attractive place to live for all."

When cold weather hit hard in the middle of a pandemic, the City of Kansas City opened the region’s largest warming center and provided many social services on-site at the Bartle Hall Warming Center.

“We opened the region’s largest warming center at Bartle Hall to ensure nobody

in the Kansas City area would have to spend the night in the cold, particularly during one of the coldest streaks in our history,” Platt said. “The work of grassroots volunteers and activists from several organizations has been crucial to the success of the operation, and we also thank the many non-profit agencies that continue to help serve those in need.”

The success of the warming center is clear when you look at the numbers:

- Opened with 100 beds, then increased to more than 400 beds during the coldest nights in February
- Averaged 307 guests per night
- Served two meals per night to all clients – approximately 28,000 meals provided
- Shower facility and laundry services provided daily on-site
- Partnered with Downtown Council and its Community Improvement District Ambassadors to manage the center
- Averaged 13 volunteers per night, adding up to hundreds of people from across the metro who donated their time and supplies
- Collected \$19,500 in donations for the warming center

The warming center opened in January as a temporary center, and closed March 17 after fulfilling the immediate and urgent need for shelter during winter’s coldest months. Prior to closing, several non-profit service providers worked on-site to coordinate transfers to other facilities and ensure that all patrons received the care and support they need. They talked to clients individually to assess those needs. Additionally, some shelters have adjusted screening requirements to ensure that more people have access to the shelter. Existing shelters have had enough beds to take those who wished to transfer to another facility.

On-site service providers included TMC Behavioral Health, Swope Ridge Geriatric, reStart, City Union Mission, Benilde Hall, Above and Beyond, Save Inc, Comprehensive Mental Health, Swope Health, Hope Faith, Care Beyond the Blvd, Street Medicine KC, Morning Glory, Veterans Affairs and the GKC

Coalition to End Homelessness. Grassroots community organizations include Creative Innovative Entrepreneurs, Divine Connections and It's Time 4 Justice.

“The Bartle Hall Warming Center provided a safe port in the storm for hundreds of unhoused men and women who took shelter and comfort over the final six weeks of winter. Without the center, we were facing a humanitarian crisis on the streets of Kansas City,” said Bill Dietrich, President & CEO of the Downtown Council.

“On behalf of the Downtown Council and Community Improvement Districts, we are proud of our work with the City, local non-profits, and hundreds of volunteers from across the metro to bring expertise, compassion and provide much-needed relief and life-saving services at this critical time.”

Outreach has continued throughout the winter months to our entire houseless community, particularly to those who have set up encampments across the city, to make sure they know that we still have more than enough beds available in local shelters, and to provide referrals to social service agencies. City Councilmember Ryana Parks-Shaw has even taken laptops to the encampments to help people get their stimulus checks.

However, safety concerns at those encampments include drug use, violence, property damage and weapons on-site. We have been encouraging those who have been in the encampments to take advantage of existing programs that can help them with financial and health issues, as well as to find a place to stay.

This year the City is providing over \$23 million toward preventing homelessness and supporting those most in need. \$8.5 million has been allocated directly to support community organizations that provide housing, emergency shelter, outreach, counseling, rent and utility assistance and other services to KCMO residents. An additional \$14.8 million in federal relief grants is available to tenants through several community organizations. Go to kcmo.gov/renthelp for information and the list of agencies distributing those funds.

Media Questions may be directed to Chris Hernandez, City Communications Director at Chris.hernandez@kcmo.org or 816-787-1507.

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The City of Kansas City, Missouri, is the city of fountains, boulevards, jazz and barbeque with world-class arts and world champion teams. Strong neighborhoods are home to a half-million residents across more than 300 square miles. We are a UNESCO Creative City of Music, we are expanding the most successful modern streetcar system in the country, and a new airport terminal is under construction. Our elected officials and professional staff work together to provide approximately 400 city services through nationally-certified and award-winning departments and programs.
