

Solving homelessness in Houston:

Houston Endowment makes a significant investment in *The Way Home*

See the [Houston Chronicle editorial](#) from December 29, 2014.

Houston has the largest homeless population of any city in the state of Texas and one of the largest in the U.S. In 2012, under the leadership of Houston Mayor Annise Parker, an ambitious city-wide initiative was launched to end chronic and veteran homelessness in Houston by 2015. Part of [The Way Home](#) initiative is a \$665 million campaign to transform the system that serves the homeless by providing additional permanent supportive housing units. While public entities will provide most of the funding, about 5 percent of the campaign, \$33 million, will need to be contributed by private donors. **In November 2014, Houston Endowment invested \$12.5 million in organizations supporting this effort, the largest private commitment to date.**

This was a major investment for the foundation. Here are some of the reasons why we did it:

“Ripe” opportunity with multi-party collaboration. With significant federal funding available, Harris County and the City of Houston, as well as the business, non-profit and faith-based communities, all agreed it was time to act. This collective effort includes more than 70 homeless providers who have come together around an integrated approach to a system-wide solution, including clear goals and common measures for success.

Houston Endowment values opportunities to work with both public and private entities towards systemic solutions. *The Way Home* collaborative model felt “ripe” for a broad, leveraged impact in the community.

A plan for systemic change with proven success. A plan with clearly stated goals was outlined by the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care. The Way Home Strategic Plan focuses on coordinated strategic investments that will drive the new system, matching resources to the need for quality affordable housing and stabilizing services, with an effective governance and monitoring system in place.

The first two phases of the initiative – ending chronic and veteran homelessness by 2015 – include three specific strategies:

- Identify and prioritize housing placement
- Create access to permanent supportive housing, and
- Link services to housing

The progress thus far? Since 2011, more than 3,000 veterans housed and 2,059 chronically homeless individuals housed, part of a 37 percent decline in homelessness overall with a 40 percent decline in veteran homelessness and a 57 percent decline in chronic homelessness.

The Way Home is a concerted effort to end homelessness in Houston and, in doing so, to be the first major city in the U.S. to achieve this goal. Tackling one of Houston’s most challenging

issues touches lives and underscores our mission to improve the quality of life for the people of greater Houston.

Houston Endowment's \$12.5 million in grants in November for homeless service providers include:

Corporation for Supportive Housing **\$4,000,000**

Toward creating and supporting a permanent supportive housing (PSH) initiative serving the homeless and at-risk population in Houston

Healthcare for the Homeless-Houston **\$1,400,000**

Toward a new administrative building and clinic providing services to the homeless population

New Hope Housing Inc. **\$1,610,000**

Toward construction of new housing development serving homeless and at-risk families in Houston

SEARCH Homeless Services **\$3,000,000**

Toward a capital improvement plan, aligned with the City's plan to end homelessness in Houston

Star of Hope Mission **\$1,000,000**

Toward construction of a new campus that will provide emergency services to homeless women and their families

The Women's Home **\$1,500,000**

Toward a social services center and a permanent supportive housing complex for chronically homeless and low income families