



Open Discussion on Housing Security: Key Points & Insights for Stark County

April 17, 2025



Public Health
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Addressing Housing Barriers: A Community Discussion on Access and Solutions

As part of the 2024 Community Health Needs Assessment, the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) subcommittee focused on reducing non-treatment barriers to behavioral health access; examining social barriers in greater depth. To support this effort, a survey was developed to assess the social barriers impacting Stark County residents. The survey was administered through organizations during the fall and winter of 2024.

The final report included detailed responses from 137 residents, all of whom were at least 18 years old and actively receiving services from one or more of the participating organizations. These organizations included Access Health Stark County, CommQuest, Aultman Generations, Stark County Health Department, Massillon City Health Department, and Alliance Family Health Center.

On April 17th, the Stark County Health Department hosted an open discussion on housing stability to address challenges, share insights, and collaborate on solutions that impact Stark County. The conversation was guided by four main categories of questions.



This report presents selected results from the Social Barriers Survey, along with key points and insights from the open discussion.

Social Barriers Survey Snapshot



Reported that more than half of their monthly income goes to their rent or mortgage.

Among those surveyed:



HOUSING RELATED ISSUES MOST REPORTED	
Paying rent on time	32.1%
Lack of credit history or poor credit	17.5%
Taking care of things around the house	15.3%
Bug infestation	15.3%
Being wait listed for public housing	15.3%



Respondents were asked what they felt would help them make it easier for them to meet their housing needs. The most common responses included more affordable rent or housing, employment, and assistance with bills.

Q1. WHAT ARE YOU HEARING? WHAT ARE THE MAIN ISSUES WITH HOUSING?

Rent is more than income minimum

Late fees applied immediately after missing rent

People do not have phones to call the homeless hotline

Landlords collecting multiple application fees without following through on renting the unit

Overcrowding—multiple families sharing a single home

People facing homelessness ("couch surfing") unable to secure permanent housing

Landlords unwilling to make repairs

Convicted persons, cannot get housing due to their background

Shortage of available housing

Limited resources

Clients have a history of evictions

Federal housing subsidies can't cover market rent, and most landlords are raising their rents to match or go above market rates

Poor environmental factors in the home (mold, plumbing)

Tenants penalized or denied repairs if rent is not fully paid

Many property managers do not implement payment plans

Clients placed on waiting lists

Outside companies purchasing homes/apartments and raising

Mental health challenges leading to housing instability

(Individuals falling back into old patterns after trying to live independently)

No emergency housing

Aging or outdated housing stock

Long waiting list

Q2. WHAT RESOURCES ARE YOU USING?

Catholic Charities

- Utility Assistance
- Rent Assistance
- AEP Neighbor to Neighbor Program
- Emergency Furniture Program
- Senior Rent & Mortgage Assistance

Chasing Hope House

- Housing Assistance

Coalition on Homelessness & Housing in Ohio

- Youth Housing Initiative
- SOAR Ohio
- COHHIO's Racial Equity Committee
- Healthy Beginnings at Home

Homeless Hotline

- Refers individuals to appropriate shelters and programs

Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority

- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)
- Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV)
- Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP)

Stark County Community Action Agency

- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
- Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP)

The Salvation Army

- Rent Assistance
- Utility Assistance
- Homeless Showers
- Homeless Bag Lunches

Other Options

- Stark Help Central
- Homeless Shelters

United Way

- Birth certificate and ID vouchers

Q3. WHAT WORKS?

WHAT PROGRAMS OR SERVICES SEEM TO HELP?



Agency /Community Conversations & Collaboratives

- Ongoing efforts to bring agencies together for dialogue, resource sharing, and joint problem-solving.



Alliance Commons

- A community hub where multiple agencies work together to serve the community.



Canton for All People

- Focuses on promoting homeownership in the 44703/Shorb area.
- Offers a 15-year tax abatement incentive to encourage home buying.



Chasing Hope House

- A new housing project being launched to support individuals experiencing homelessness.



Economic Housing Board

- Supports working individuals earning \$35,000-\$100,000 annually in securing and sustaining affordable housing, while shifting the narrative around what constitutes essential housing needs.



Legal Aid

- Provides legal support and is available for community presentation and workshops.



Mental Health Group Homes



Stark County Collaborative Study

- Initiative aimed at increasing access to housing services.
- Includes a group focused specifically on expanding housing availability.

Q4. WHAT ARE THE GAPS IN SERVICE?

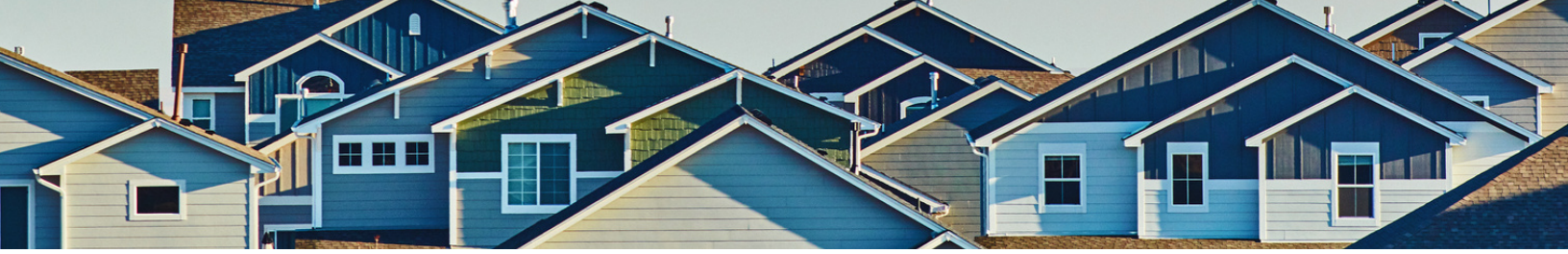


Connecting the community to support and resources they need, beyond housing	Duplication of services across organizations <i>(leads to inefficiencies and underutilization)</i>
Data sharing among agencies	Multiple organizations are working in silos
Funding to support housing issues	Do not know all the available resources
Limited access to and use of shared data systems	Lack of accountability <i>(increase/expand partnerships)</i>
Lack of communication between community agencies/partners	Service providers not trusted by community members
Clients have to go through too many steps to access resources	Processes not being addressed early enough <i>(upstream and streamlined)</i>

Q5. WHAT INNOVATIVE APPROACHES COULD BE DONE?



Creation of the Social Information Exchange
Expected to be implemented July 2025



RECOMMENDATIONS



Community Engagement and Empathy

- Share information and resources on community bulletin boards within agencies
- Increase opportunities for community engagement and feedback
- Agencies adopt a more empathetic and compassionate approach in their services and communication



Educating Communities

- Provide accessible education on the steps to owning a home
- Organize a community resource fair to raise awareness and connect residents with services



Funding and Resources

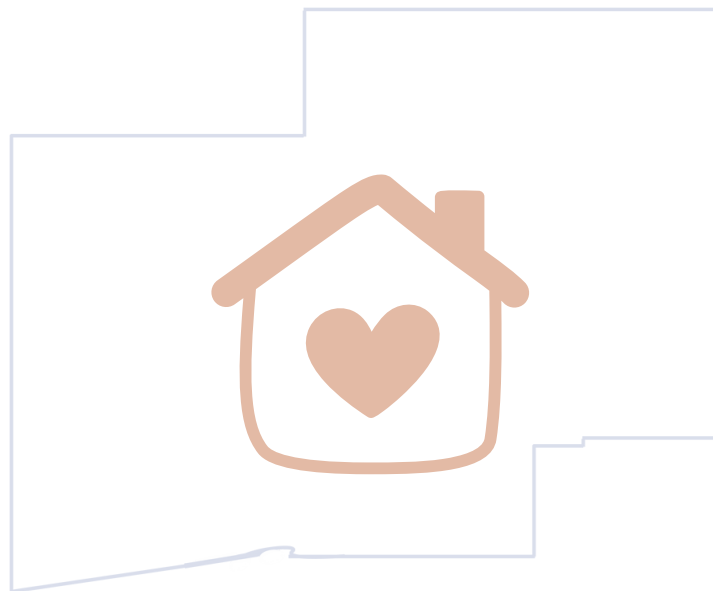
- Advocate for increased resources and better allocation to support underserved individuals



AGENCIES PRESENT AT OPEN DISCUSSION MEETING

Access Health Stark County
AHEAD Inc.
Alliance Area DV Shelter
Alliance Family Health Center
Aultman Hospital
Beacon Charitable Pharmacy
Canton City Public Health
Canton City School District
Canton For All People
Catholic Charities
Chasing Hope House
City of Massillon
Cleveland Clinic Mercy
CommQuest
Community Legal Aid Services
Community Member
Domestic Violence Project, Inc.

Greater Stark County Urban League
Massillon City Health Department
North Canton Medical Foundation
Project Hope
Refuge of Hope
Shipley Child Health Clinic
Stark Community Foundation
Stark County Community Action Agency
Stark County Court of Common Pleas-Reentry
Stark County Educational Service Center
Stark County Family Council
Stark County Health Department
Stark Economic Development Board
Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority
StarkMHAR
Strengthening Stark
United Way of Greater Stark County





FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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