



## **Press Release**

**For Immediate Release January 10, 2024**

### **Four Community Organizations Release Analysis of Data About Unhoused Populations and Current Housing Options in the City of St. Louis**

Four community organizations representing businesses, residents, property owners, and neighborhoods today released a report that provides meaningful data that should inform the discussion about pending legislative measures affecting City of St. Louis resources and policies regarding unhoused residents.

The four organizations who together sponsored the report are [Citizens for a Greater Downtown St. Louis](#), the [Downtown Neighborhood Association](#), the Neighborhood Alliance, and the Downtown St. Louis Economic Development Council. These organizations represent residents and businesses that share a concern about how public policy affects the future of the City of St. Louis and its neighborhoods.

Addressing the needs of the homeless is especially significant for many City neighborhoods since the City has become the *de facto* center of the region's homeless population. City neighborhoods are generally highly accessible by public transit, home to a disproportionate number of agencies serving the homeless while providing conditions conducive to living on the streets. Major encampments are common, often disrupting surrounding properties and businesses. The images of encampments, panhandling, drug-dealing, vandalism, and violence related to the homeless are now closely associated with the City.

The report that is being released today provides a factual foundation that we believe has been missing from the debate about the "Unhoused Bill of Rights" that took place during public hearings before the Board of Aldermen. The report provides data that dispel a variety of misleading assertions about the unhoused population and the resources provided by the City.

Key findings include:

- The number of unhoused persons in the City, not including those in some form of permanent housing for the homeless, hasn't changed significantly since 2010 and is now nearly 16% smaller than in 2005 (having dropped from 1,485 to 1,252).
- There are more emergency shelter beds in the City of St. Louis than there have been at any time in the last 20 years (896 current beds compared to a low of 630 beds in 2010).
- From 2016 to 2023, the City increased the total number of beds/units available to the unhoused, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing, by over 1,000 beds/units, from 2,841 to 3,856, but didn't reduce the number of homeless people not in permanent housing, which went from 1,248 to 1,252 over that 8 year period.

- The City provides a grossly disproportionate share of resources to serve the unhoused as compared to surrounding areas.
- Many unhoused people in the City migrate from elsewhere, including surrounding counties, elsewhere in the State of Missouri, and other states that may not provide the level of services now available in the City.
- Some of this migration is due to the deliberate actions by neighboring local governments and social service organizations, and by the knowledge that the City is one of the few areas that provides significant resources to serve homeless people.
- There is a strong inference, both from our local experience and that of other cities, that providing more resources to serve the homeless creates an incentive for greater migration into the City, thereby reducing services available to homeless City residents.

While this paper strongly challenges some of the assumptions that led to the proposed “Homeless Bill of Rights”, it does not suggest that the City should abandon its responsibility to its homeless citizens. Rather, it is an appeal to better serve those citizens by creating systems that reduce homelessness in the City, rather than inviting more of it. Solutions must be driven by compassion, but also by good information, evidence of strategies that work, and a recognition that the City of St. Louis needs regional partners to succeed.

Go to the website [www.citizensforagreaterdowntown.org](http://www.citizensforagreaterdowntown.org) to download a copy of the report.

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