

FINDINGS PRESENTATION

Community Housing Study

BACKGROUND

Why This Study?

Study Driver

The Trust identified housing as one of the community’s greatest unmet needs. This study was initiated to develop a fact-based understanding of housing conditions, gaps, and pressures across the community.

Study Objective

To provide objective, evidence-based information that supports the Trust and its partners in making informed strategic decisions — supplying the data and insights needed to move housing initiatives forward with community partners, funders, and stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

Study Inputs & Data Sources

Community Survey

WHO TOOK IT

- 80 Natrona County residents with lived experience
- 50 leaders and members of community partners working in housing or housing-adjacent spaces

Public Data Sources

- Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) Statewide Housing Needs Assessment
- WY Statewide Continuum of Care data analysis, derived from 2019–2024 US Census tables and Wyoming Department of Health data
- Wyoming Statewide Strategic Housing Action Plan



Natrona County has a shortage of **1,117** affordable units for households earning **\$25,000** or less.

WCDA Statewide Housing Needs Assessment, 2024

Natrona County scored among the highest in Wyoming for prevalence of **5 or more** homelessness risk factors.

WY Statewide CoC Data Analysis, 2019–2024

FINDINGS

Themes

THEME 1

Affordability

Housing costs consistently outpace the incomes of community members across all housing types.

66%

of respondents attribute the primary cause of housing instability to the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing.

55%

of respondents with lived experience were sheltered outside at some point during their experience of homelessness.

THEME 1 · AFFORDABILITY — VOICES FROM RESPONDENTS

“The shortage of affordable and supportive housing in Natrona County leads to poorer physical and mental health, increased financial stress, and barriers to accessing care and community support. People on fixed incomes often have to settle for subpar units or locations with limited transportation and services. Long waitlists, coupled with rigorous application processes, make achieving stability even more complicated.”

COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY RESPONDENT

“...majority of income going to rent...nothing left for the extras like food, healthcare, recreation, transportation...”

SURVEY RESPONDENT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

Top Indicator of Success in Addressing Homelessness in Natrona County

Developing low-barrier, deeply affordable housing and supportive care.

THEME 2

High Barriers to Housing Access & Shelter

Structural, financial, and systemic obstacles prevent many residents from securing stable housing.

Barriers to Housing

- Past evictions
- Justice involvement
- Application fees
- Landlords unwilling to work with voucher systems
- Security deposits
- Poor credit

Barriers to Shelter

- Substance use and sobriety requirements
- Having a pet
- Program and service requirements

THEME 2

High Barriers to Housing Access & Shelter

Structural, financial, and systemic obstacles prevent many residents from securing stable housing.

High Barriers & Justice Involvement

40% of community-wide survey respondents identified high-barrier, low-income housing as a major obstacle. Justice-system involvement was cited as a barrier by 24% of community-wide respondents and 17% of those with lived experience.

Top Priority: Voucher & Rental Access

42% of people with lived experience said improving access to vouchers and rental assistance is the number one priority for providers and funders. 30% of community-wide respondents agreed — the top-ranked priority in both surveys.

THEME 2 · HIGH BARRIERS TO HOUSING ACCESS & SHELTER — VOICES FROM RESPONDENTS

Q: What would success in addressing housing and homelessness in Natrona County look like five years from now?

“Reduce the number of hoops people have to jump through to get a roof over their heads.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

“There’s lots of untapped resources through the Housing Authority because they choose to be more strict than federal requirements force them to be.”

COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY RESPONDENT

THEME 3

Stigma Surrounding Homelessness

Social stigma and misconceptions create significant barriers for people experiencing housing instability.

Stigma Compounds Every Challenge

Stigma and misinformation about homelessness were named across both surveys and community conversations as persistent barriers, compounding individual hardship and blocking community-level action.

NIMBY & Community Opposition

Community opposition and NIMBY resistance appeared in survey responses as a recognized barrier to housing development, signaling that political and social resistance is already present in Natrona County.

Lived Voices Are Being Left Out

People with lived experience specifically highlighted the importance of being asked for their perspectives and seeing tangible action tied to their input. Being heard, and believed, matters as much as the services themselves.

Negative public narratives and misconceptions about people experiencing homelessness compound the challenges individuals face and impede local progress.

THEME 3 · STIGMA SURROUNDING HOMELESSNESS — VOICES FROM RESPONDENTS

“Stigma toward those experiencing homelessness creates additional hurdles.”

COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY RESPONDENT

“Just because we don’t have access to the same necessities you do, it doesn’t make us gross, mooches, or worthless. Just different struggles. Please know that most of us are battling things we will never tell anyone.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

THEME 4

Access to Services

Gaps in service availability, awareness, and geographic reach limit support for those in need.

Individualized Services

22% of lived experience respondents and 26% of community-wide respondents named expanding social services, like case management, as the number one priority for providers and funders.

Variety of Services

Services exist in Natrona County, but many people experiencing homelessness don’t know how to access them. The system is described as confusing and hard to navigate — a navigation gap, not just a service gap.

Navigation and Resource Center

18% of lived experience respondents named Kind Grounds as a program providing individualized, accessible services — the highest of any single provider named.

THEME 4 · ACCESS TO SERVICES — VOICES FROM RESPONDENTS

“Expand and improve social services offered to tenants, like case management or behavioral health services.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

“Financial help is always great, but we need more hands-on help.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

THEME 5

Opportunities for Investment in Housing

Cross-sector collaboration is both a recognized strength and an area of significant opportunity for growth.

Impactful Community Conversations

Community partners named the Trust’s Summit as a valuable catalyst for collaboration and momentum around housing in Natrona County.

Strong Partnership Models

Schools, shelters, health systems, legal agencies, and community organizations.

Cross-Sector Work

Plans of Safe Care Collaborative.

THEME 5 · PARTNERSHIPS — VOICES FROM RESPONDENTS

“Personally, I think we have too many partners duplicating efforts, and the Collective has proven itself again and again to be thoughtful, efficient, and supportive to the issues of the unhoused. The Collective should manage and oversee the homeless housing issues in Natrona County.”

COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY RESPONDENT

“We can see individuals and families on probation and parole struggle with finding affordable housing. Forced to live in places that are not ideal for recovery, are not safe for children, or just stuck living at the rescue mission or on the streets.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT

FINDINGS

Areas of Opportunity

The findings point to six areas where community action and partnership may create meaningful change. These are not recommendations — they are doorways for exploration and collective brainstorming.

- 1

Centering Lived Experience

There is an opportunity for the community to more intentionally bring the voices of those with lived experience of housing instability into the decisions and systems that affect them.
- 2

Expanding Affordable & Supportive Housing

There is an opportunity to grow the availability of affordable, low-barrier, and supportive housing options through creative investment and development strategies.
- 3

Removing Barriers to Access and Stability

There is an opportunity to reduce the structural, financial, and policy-level barriers that prevent people from obtaining and maintaining stable housing.
- 4

Building Local Development Capacity

There is an opportunity to strengthen the local knowledge, relationships, and capacity needed to grow and sustain housing development across the community.
- 5

Connecting People to a Full Spectrum of Services

There is an opportunity to build infrastructure that supports people across the full continuum of housing need, from prevention through long-term stability.
- 6

Shifting the Narrative Around Homelessness

There is an opportunity for the broader community to actively reshape how homelessness and housing instability are understood, discussed, and responded to.

SWOT Analysis Overview

Strengths

Strong community collaboration & existing partnerships

Momentum & growing sense of urgency

Kind Grounds, existing shelter, the Trust & the Summit

Weaknesses

Lack of affordable housing & almost no low-barrier options

Limited local capacity/knowledge of housing development

Low-quality existing housing stock & lack of landlord accountability

Opportunities

Policy/legislative changes to become more developer-friendly

Expansion of affordable & supportive housing

Public education to tell the story of homelessness

Threats

Stigma & political resistance to affordable housing

Workforce shortages for development & service provision

No state housing funding & changing federal landscape

SWOT

Strengths

What is the community already doing well? What assets and capabilities exist?

- Strong community collaboration — cross-sector partnerships already exist across schools, shelters, health systems, legal agencies, and community organizations.
- Growing momentum and a genuine community-wide sense of urgency around housing.
- Kind Grounds — a navigation and resource center that 18% of lived experience respondents named as an exceptional, accessible service.
- An existing emergency shelter and the Trust’s history of convening partners through events like the Summit.
- Lived experience perspectives already present in the workforce and in community conversations.

Weaknesses

Where are the gaps, resource shortfalls, or structural challenges?

- Critical shortage of affordable housing: a deficit of 1,117 units affordable to households earning \$25,000 or less.
- Almost no low-barrier housing or shelter options in Natrona County.
- Limited local capacity and knowledge of the housing development process.
- Low-quality existing housing stock and insufficient mechanisms to hold landlords accountable.
- Point-in-Time (PIT) underreporting and undercounting — the true scale of homelessness is likely larger than recorded.

SWOT

Opportunities

What external conditions, trends, or partnerships could be leveraged?

- Policy and legislative changes to become more developer-friendly, including modernizing zoning codes.
- Potential infrastructure investments and pooled/impact investment models for housing development.
- Expansion of affordable and supportive housing through land banking and strategic partnerships.
- Public education campaigns to shift the narrative and tell the story of homelessness in Natrona County.
- Increased Medicaid billing through CCW waiver expansion to fund expanded service capacity.

SWOT

Threats

What external pressures or risks could undermine progress?

- Stigma and political/community resistance to affordable and supportive housing development.
- Increasing construction and development costs nationally, making new affordable units harder to build.
- Workforce shortages for both housing development and service provision.
- No dedicated state funding for housing and an increasingly uncertain federal funding landscape.
- Limited partner capacity for implementation — frontline providers are already stretched thin.