
CONVERSATIONS ON HOMELESSNESS AMES AND STORY COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS 2025



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VISION STATEMENT TO END HOMELESSNESS

The City of Ames and Story County envision a thriving, inclusive community rooted in innovation, sustainability, and opportunity. We are committed to ensuring a high quality of life for all residents through equitable access to housing, education, and essential services. Together, we strive to be a place where every person has a safe and stable place to call home. Our shared vision is a community where no individual experiences homelessness.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FIVE COMMUNITY NEEDS

Throughout the planning process, five themes emerged from stakeholders about the greatest needs in Story County. These themes were consistent with those reported in the Story County Quality of Life Alliance (SCQLA) recent needs assessment, as well as with the Iowa Homelessness Needs Assessment. The themes were centered on coordination between providers, homelessness prevention, the need for increased case management, expanding emergency shelter capacity, and providing rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, and affordable housing.

1	Provider Coordination. The development of a Task Force on Housing to help develop sustainable sources and coordinated responses to funding opportunities is critical to building a coordinated and resilient response to homelessness in Story County. The Task Force will prioritize collaborative grant applications, resource sharing, and cross-sector partnerships, and the coordination of existing providers to ensure accessible, all-weather daytime refuge.
2	Improving Homelessness Prevention. The plan proposes the launch of a Peer Navigator Program and the expansion of IowaWORKS Mobile Workforce Center job fairs to integrate SOAR and benefits application support. In addition, it recommends continuing to provide rent, mortgage, utilities support, and eviction prevention services to help residents avoid homelessness and maintain stable housing.
3	Increased Case Management. Story County is exploring ways to support case management. This includes consideration of a case manager/housing coordinator to serve as a community facilitator to identify affordable housing opportunities. In addition to this position, the use of peer navigators with lived experience of homelessness to engage and build trust with people who are unhoused, especially in public spaces, would increase access to case management services.
4	Expanding Emergency Shelter. The City and County will continue to work with CISS related to the management of The Bridge Home (TBH) and explore additional options for all-weather daytime refuge.
5	Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive and Affordable Housing. Ames currently houses the primary emergency shelter in the Two Rivers region, placing a disproportionate burden on one County and City while regional needs increase. This plan proposes that the Task Force and key stakeholders investigate funding opportunities to develop a mixed-use housing development, combining affordable units with permanent supportive housing and wraparound services.

THE 2025 STORY COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Story County is located in central Iowa and is home to a diverse mix of urban and rural communities. With a population of just over 102,498 residents, the county includes the city of Ames, as well as several smaller towns and unincorporated areas. Ames, the area's largest municipality, is home to Iowa State University, and serves as a major educational and economic hub for the region, contributing to a dynamic local culture.

Despite its strengths in education, research, and agriculture, Story County faces many of the same housing instability and homelessness challenges experienced by communities across the nation. Affordable housing shortages, rising rents, and limited shelter and support options for vulnerable populations are growing concerns across Story County. Furthermore, the city of Ames, which experiences the greatest concentration of individuals experiencing homelessness in Story County, has a low vacancy rate due to the high number of university students, adding an additional level of complexity to the overall housing shortages.

The strategic plan on homelessness for Story County recognizes the unique characteristics of the region: its blend of rural and urban settings, its strong community engagement, and its wealth of public and private partners. This plan seeks to build on those strengths by identifying targeted, collaborative solutions that address the root causes of homelessness and improve outcomes for individuals and families experiencing housing instability.

Underlying this plan is the idea that the path from homelessness to housing begins with identifying a person experiencing homelessness, placing the person in emergency and temporary shelter, assisting with needed services, and finding stable housing with an ongoing plan of supportive services, designed to provide what is needed by the individual to remain in stable housing.

PREVENTION AND IDENTIFICATION

The plan includes several recommendations designed to enhance the identification of people experiencing homelessness and link them to available resources. This plan recommends increased funding for eviction mediation, temporary rental assistance, moving expenses or other forms of assistance that will help prevent homelessness. Additional short-term recommendations include creating a standardized assessment and referral process, creating a peer navigator program, and working with IowaWORKS to reach individuals in rural communities with services, benefits, and resources.

EMERGENCY AND TEMPORARY SHELTER

Emergency and temporary shelters provide the immediate need of shelter and a safe place to sleep for people experiencing homelessness as well as more quickly connecting them with housing and support services. Additionally, establishes a Homelessness Task Force to help identify funding opportunities for the expansion and rehabilitation of emergency shelters and day services for those experiencing homelessness.

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

To ensure alignment with the community's Housing First approach to end homelessness, it is important to establish affordable and subsidized housing options. Communities focused on a Housing First approach to end homelessness emphasize strategies that reduce the amount of time a person experiences homelessness. For people experiencing homelessness chronically, the goal is placement into permanent supportive housing that provides long-term support. For people experiencing homelessness episodically due to a housing crisis, the goal is rapid re-housing that quickly returns them to permanent stable housing.

A mixed-use housing development that brings together permanent supportive housing, senior housing, and affordable units for low-income residents directly addresses the growing challenge to the Story County community: rising housing costs and a median wage that falls short of what's needed for housing stability.

This plan involves the strategic development of collaborative funding applications to secure the resources necessary for construction and long-term sustainability for service providers. By combining supportive services with affordable living options, this project would not only provide safe, stable housing, but also offer integrated care, dignity, and community connection for vulnerable neighbors, including those getting back on their feet after exiting homelessness, older adults on fixed incomes, and working families.

FUNDING STABILITY AND FUTURE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

Attracting funding from national foundations and building strong local community support are essential to creating a lasting, effective response to homelessness in Story County. This strategic plan was developed out of community conversations on homelessness, and is designed to demonstrate innovation, collaboration, and measurable impact.

In Year One (FY 2025), the plan launches foundational efforts including the coordination of existing providers to offer consistent, all-weather daytime refuge for the winter of 2025.

A Peer Navigator Program will connect individuals with services and build on the existing IowaWORKS Mobile Workforce Center job fairs, provides maximum efficiency by utilizing existing Iowa services to reach Story County residents eligible for social security, disability and other Federal and state benefits. These early actions are designed to position Story County as a model for funders seeking high-impact, community-driven solutions.

In Year Two, the plan formalizes the efforts with the creation of a Task Force on Homelessness, supporting community efforts to provide all-weather daytime refuge, and aligning or supplementing local funding for emergency housing.

In Year Three, the plan recommends that the Task Force investigate national and state funding for a mixed-use development that includes Permanent Supportive Housing, senior housing, and affordable units, potentially with services, community and business spaces. By aligning local commitment with external investment, this strategy ensures both immediate relief and long-term housing stability for the County's most vulnerable residents.

CURRENT STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN STORY COUNTY

DATA PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT

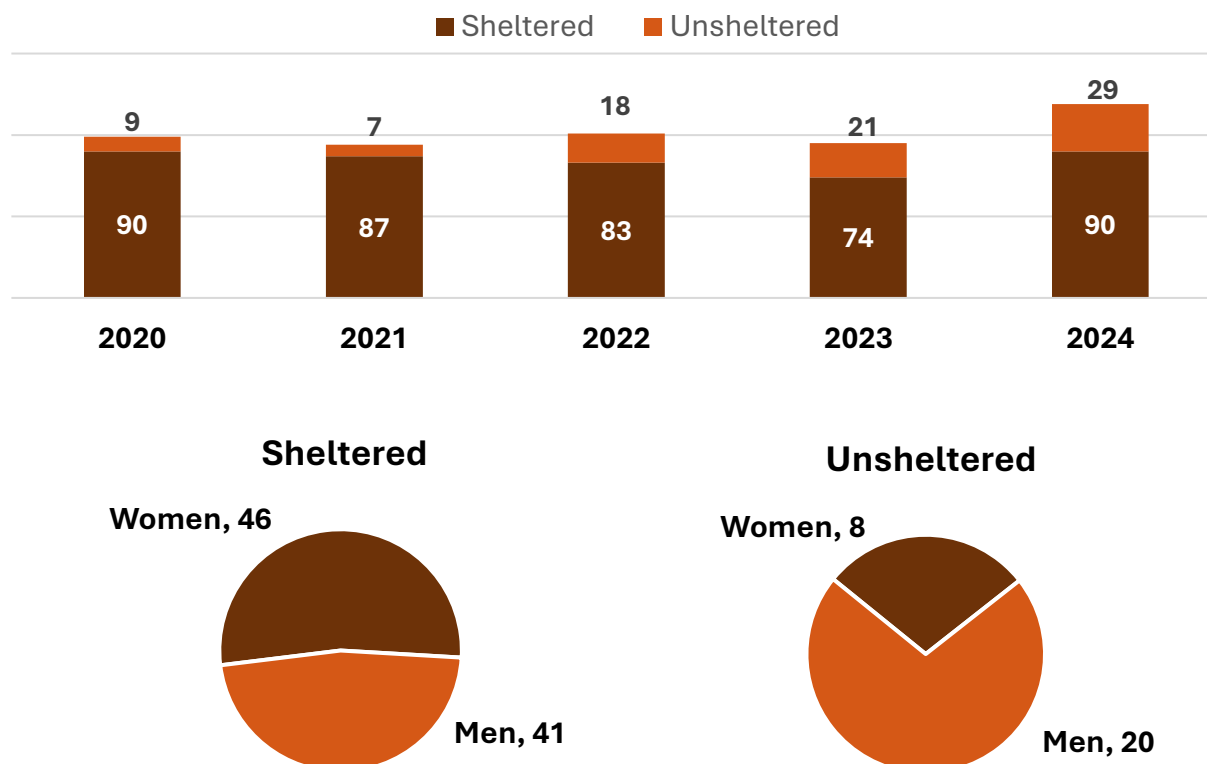
The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count is an annual event mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to enumerate individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. This count includes both sheltered individuals—those in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or Safe Havens—and unsheltered individuals residing in places not meant for human habitation, such as streets, vehicles, or abandoned buildings.

Although an important and useful indicator used for tracking homelessness, the PIT Count is widely recognized as an undercount of homelessness because the counts may miss some individuals who experience episodic or hidden homelessness, such as individuals who are doubled-up with friends or family, couch-surfing, or living in cars or abandoned buildings where they may not be found, and those who intentionally avoid contact with PIT count volunteers due to fear of law enforcement, stigma, or past negative experiences with service providers. Survivors of domestic violence or human trafficking may actively hide their homelessness to avoid danger.

To present a more accurate picture, the PIT count data is presented in this report alongside Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, U.S. Census data, school district data, and other local outreach efforts that track housing instability and impacts of homelessness.

PREVALENCE AND DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESSNESS

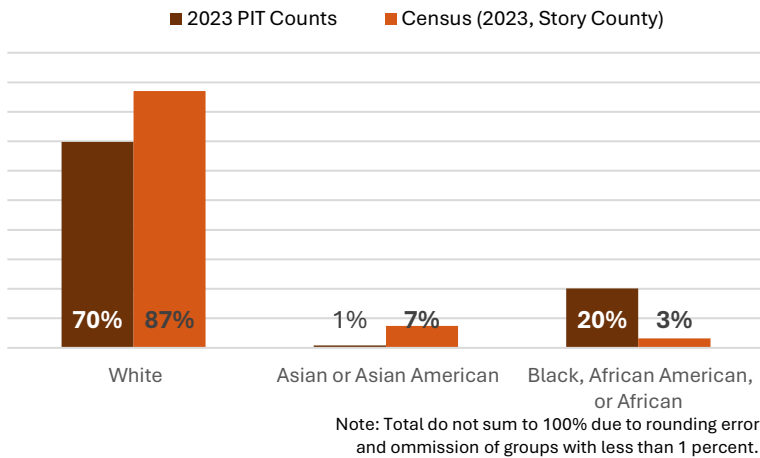
Homelessness in Story County has increased by 20 percent since 2020, from 99 individuals in 2020 to 119 individuals in 2024. The increase has been in unsheltered individuals, from 9 to 29 people over the past five years, an increase of 222%. Although more women than men are housed in shelters (46 women as compared with 41 men), far more men are unsheltered (20 men as compared with 8 women), with four individuals gender unknown.



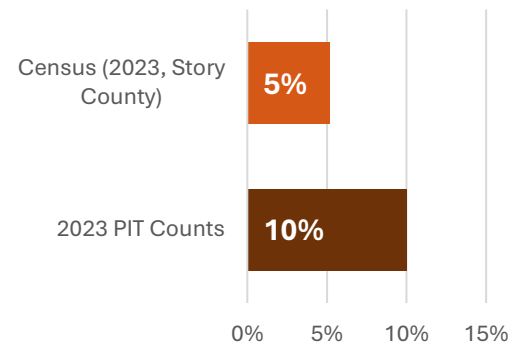
Among the individuals experiencing homelessness included in the PIT count, about twice the percentage were Hispanic as compared to the Story County demographics as represented by the 2023 Census (10% vs. 5%). One in five unhoused people were Black (20%), as compared to just 3% of the population.

Females represent 47.6% of the County’s population and 45% of those included in the unhoused PIT count were female. Veterans are estimated to be 3% of the population and were slightly overrepresented in the PIT count at 3.6%. The charts below represent PIT Count data¹.

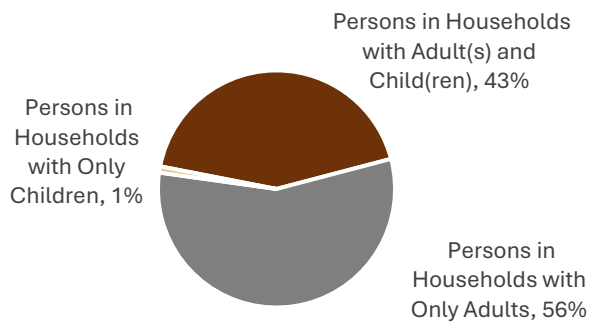
RACIAL COMPOSITION



ETHNICITY (Percent Hispanic)

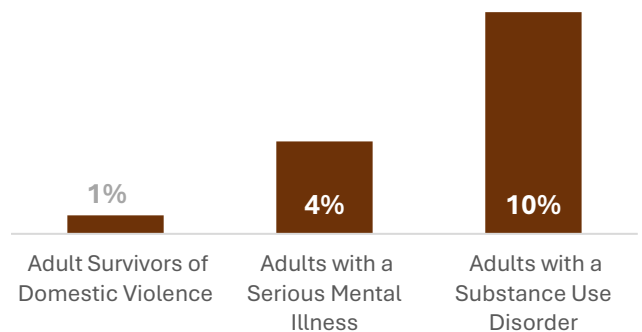


HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



Almost half (43%) were part of a household that included at least one child and 1%, or 1 individual, was an unaccompanied child under the age of 18 (Person in household with only children.)

EXPERIENCE AND ISSUES FACED BY INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



About one in 10 homeless individuals were recorded as having a substance use disorder, 4% with a serious mental illness and 15 was a survivor of domestic violence. As with the PIT count itself, these may underrepresent individuals due to the one-night counting methodology.

¹ 2024 Point-in-Time Counts <https://www.hsuduser.gov/portal/datasets/ahar/2024-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us.html>

STORY COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS IMPACTING HOMELESSNESS

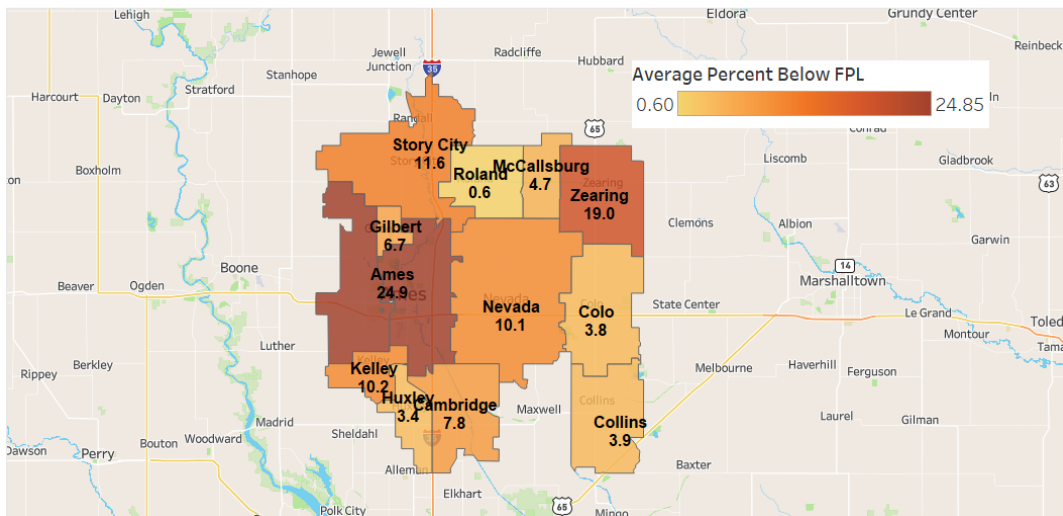
During interviews with people experiencing homelessness, conducted at Food at First, most described the causes of their loss of housing as being due to loss of a job, cost of medical care and loss of physical ability to work, or the loss of a housing situation, which they were not able to replace.

Within Story County, the City of Ames has the highest percentage of residents living under Federal poverty level, with 24.9% of residents, or almost one in four, living at or below FPL.

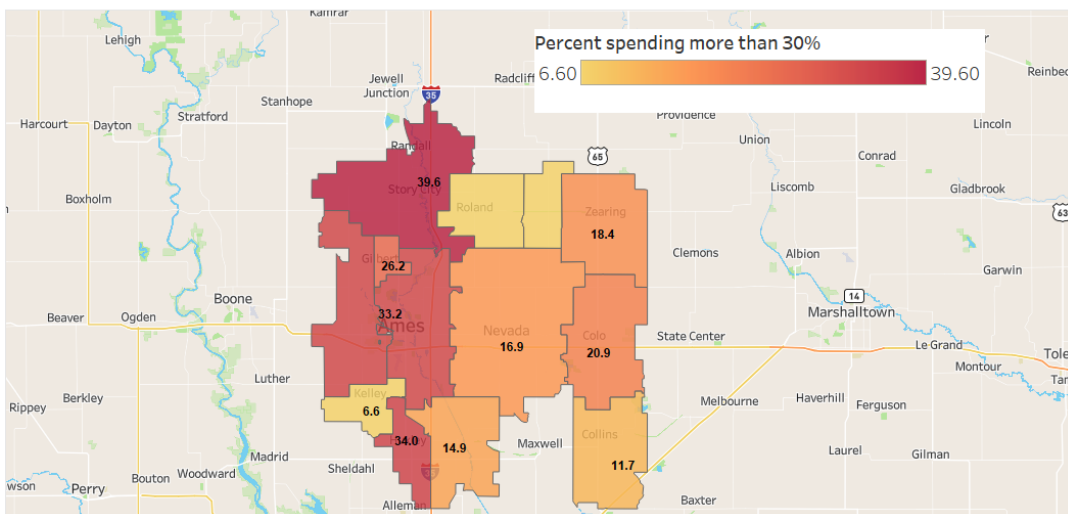
According to guidelines from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), spending more than 30% of a household's income on housing is considered "housing cost burdened." Story City (39.6%), Huxley (34%), and Ames (33.2%) have the highest percentage of households that pay more than 30% of their income on housing.

In the following maps, census data is not available for Maxwell.

Percent Living Under Federal Poverty Level



Percent Spending More Than 30% of Income on Housing



NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ames has historically had low vacancy rates, and the current low rates have pushed rents higher due to increased demand, [according to the Story County Housing Trust](#). Story County faces significant affordable housing challenges. According to the 2018 ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) Report, the county has the highest housing burden in Iowa, with 39% of households spending a substantial portion of their income on housing costs. Additionally, the homeownership rate in Story County was 53.5% in 2019, notably lower than the state average of 71.1%.

Based on 2011–2015 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data², the city of Ames had approximately 5,895 renter households with extremely low incomes (household income at or below 30% of the area median income.) However, only 1,874 rental units were affordable for those earning at or below 30% of the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI), resulting in a shortfall of 4,021 affordable units. This analysis includes both off-campus and on-campus student households, excluding those living in dormitories. Of the 1,874 affordable units, none were vacant. Moreover, just 1,185 units (62%) were occupied by extremely low-income households, while the remaining 689 units (37%) were occupied by households with higher incomes.

STORY COUNTY SHELTER CAPACITY AND NEEDS

The 2024 Iowa Homelessness Needs Assessment quantified the capacity and assessed needs for crisis response services, Rapid Rehousing (RRH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for the Two Rivers region, which includes Boone, Hardin, Greene, Marshall and Story Counties. The capacity and assessed need are shown below:

Population ³	Current System	Assessed Need	Optimization Gap	Percent Increase Needed
Singles:				
Crisis Response	62	105	43	69%
Rapid Rehousing (RRH)	18	181	163	906%
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)	40	76	36	90%
Families:				
Crisis Response	4	15	11	275%
Rapid Rehousing (RRH)	9	25	16	178%
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)	22	22	NA	NA
Total	155	424	269	NA

² <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html>

³ Matt White, 2024 Iowa Homelessness Needs Assessment

Rapid rehousing is an especially critical intervention (906% increase needed for single adults, 178% increase needed for families) for addressing homelessness in Story County, where rising housing costs and limited affordable housing options contribute to housing instability for many residents. This approach focuses on quickly moving individuals and families experiencing homelessness into permanent housing, with the goal of reducing the length of time they remain unhoused.

Rapid rehousing includes short-to medium-term rental assistance, case management, and supportive services tailored to each household's needs. These services might include help to secure and maintain housing, employment support, connections to healthcare and mental health services, and life skills training. By prioritizing housing stability and offering individualized support, rapid rehousing can help prevent a return to homelessness and promote long-term well-being for vulnerable residents in our community.

Crisis response, emergency housing, and permanent supportive housing are also critical needs for Story County and are essential components of a comprehensive system that supports the success of rapid rehousing. Without a robust crisis response system to address immediate needs that include emergency shelter, permanent supportive and affordable housing options for individuals with complex, long-term needs, rapid rehousing alone cannot break the cycle of homelessness. These elements work in tandem: crisis response stabilizes people in the moment, rapid rehousing transitions them into safe, stable housing, and permanent supportive housing ensures long-term sustainability for those who require ongoing care. Investing in this full spectrum of housing solutions is key to ending homelessness in Story County, rather than simply managing it.

In the following table, the number of individuals in households below 50% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are shown for the Two Rivers region⁴. Using this distribution, one would expect that approximately 72% of the population most at-risk of homelessness resides in Story County. This is understood to be an underestimate for several reasons. It does not account for migration to Story County, as a central hub for available services. In addition, many Story County services currently serve residents of surrounding counties. The Bridge Home, for example, reported in 2023 that 70% of their contacts were from Story County, with other individuals served from Marshall (18%), Boone (7%), Greene (3%) and Hardin (2%) counties⁵. Lastly, the counties of Marshall, Boone, Green and Hardin do not have emergency shelters available, and a google search of homeless shelters for these counties leads to one referral, The Bridge Home.

	Population for whom poverty status is determined	50 percent poverty level	Percent of Population
Boone County	26,170	838	7%
Greene County	8,590	427	3%

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. "Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1701, 2023, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S1701?q=Official+Poverty+Measure&g=050XX00US19015,19073,19083,19127,19169>. Accessed on April 14, 2025.

⁵ The Bridge Home, Fiscal Year 2023 Report to the Story County Board of Supervisors, April 2, 2024

Hardin County	16,031	628	5%
Marshall County	38,631	1,583	13%
Story County	86,298	8,853	72%
Total	175,720	12,329	100%

The 2024 Iowa Homelessness Needs Assessment estimated the short and long-term housing needs for the Two Rivers Region as follows:

	Short-Term Housing Needs	Long-term (Chronic) Housing Needs
Singles	372	49
Families	49	8
Total	421	57

Given the trends for Story County and Ames offering the only emergency shelter available in the Two Rivers region, and the scarcity of affordable housing throughout the region, Story County would need to prepare for at least 85% of the Two Rivers regional need.

	Short-Term (Emergency) Housing Needs	Long-term (Chronic) Housing Needs
Singles	316	42
Families	42	7
Total	358	49

The data clearly demonstrates the urgent need for a coordinated and comprehensive housing response in Story County. With Ames as a central hub for services and housing in the Two Rivers region, and affordable housing options remaining scarce, Story County must prepare to meet at least 85% of the region's emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, and supportive housing needs. This translates to short-term emergency housing for approximately 358 individuals and families, and long-term supportive housing for at least 48 individuals and families facing chronic homelessness.

Addressing these needs will require significant investment in emergency shelter capacity, expansion of rapid rehousing programs, and the development of permanent supportive and affordable housing. Without a full spectrum of housing options and supportive services, homelessness in Story County will remain a persistent and costly challenge. By acting now, and building on the assets already in place, the County can build a more resilient, equitable system that ensures every resident has a safe place to call home.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

COORDINATION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS AND AGENCIES

The Story County region has a number of agencies working towards addressing homelessness. Organizations offering shelter include The Bridge Home (TBH), which provides emergency shelter and housing navigation to the general population; Youth & Shelter Services (YSS) who targets serving youth and young adults up to 24 years of age, and Assault Care Center Extending Shelter & Support (ACCESS) who serves individuals fleeing domestic violence. All three organizations provide temporary housing for individuals and families. Central Iowa Shelter & Services (CISS) has recently begun managing The Bridge Home through a temporary Memorandum of Understanding.

In addition to these three service providers, The Salvation Army from 2024-2026 has increased its hotel voucher program for those in need of emergency shelter, that the Analysis on Social Services Analysis Team (ASSET) has purchased services from. Furthermore, a number of nonprofit and faith-based organizations supplement these efforts by providing food, clothing and other housing assistance to individuals and families in need (see Appendix A: Story County Housing Resources Matrix).

A major strength of any network is the collaborative relationships among these organizations, including regular communication, shared referrals, and participation in multi-agency coalitions. However, there have been recent challenges in aligning services due partly to the challenges around the provision of emergency shelter. Additionally, rural areas, where access and outreach are more difficult, often face challenges with service coordination, competition for limited funding, and fragmented resources.

Currently, two organizations provide coordinating activities in the community around the issue of homelessness. Analysis of Social Services Evaluation Team (ASSET) brings major funders of human services programs together in a collaborative, volunteer-led effort to coordinate local planning, assess needs, evaluate the capabilities of agencies to provide programs, and recommend funding for programs. Homeless Outreach & Support Team (HOST), recently formed in spring 2025, conducts weekly outreach activities to identify and connect with individuals experiencing homelessness and convenes service providers weekly to coordinate resources and assistance

The Analysis of Social Services Evaluation Team (ASSET) process has existed in Story County since 1985. It brings together four major funders of human services programs in a collaborative, volunteer-led effort to coordinate local planning, assess needs, evaluate the capabilities of agencies to provide programs, and recommend funding for programs. This coordination of these funders means that individual nonprofits have a single application process to request funding from the four funders. This not only streamlines the funding requests nonprofits need to complete but also increases funding coordination.

This model enables large funders to collaborate regularly in the human services field and positions Story County to tackle large community problems. By using the ASSET process to align funding decisions with the strategic priorities outlined in this plan, Story County is uniquely positioned to mobilize resources efficiently, strengthen service delivery, and make measurable progress toward ending homelessness. Through collaborative planning and investment, the county can build a resilient system that ensures every resident has access to safe, stable housing and the support needed to thrive.

EXISTING COORDINATION BARRIERS

Several service providers described collaborative and collegial relationships between providers and emphasized the ability of many individuals to provide complimentary services to individuals experiencing homelessness. Others, however, emphasized the need to improve coordination activities across organizations. They acknowledged several key barriers that impede coordination among organizations providing homelessness services, including a decentralized vision and goals, competition over funding, limited data sharing ability, and leadership challenges at a pivotal emergency shelter provider.

HOST has been able to provide an informal forum for service providers to convene, improving the coordination and collaboration amongst service providers. Continuing to support this effort will be important to achieving a comprehensive whole-community approach to addressing homelessness.

FUNDING CHALLENGES

Finding sustainable funding for homelessness services presents a number of ongoing challenges. As a mid-sized city in a largely rural county, Ames and Story County may be challenged to obtain large-scale urban funding streams, yet facing growing needs that outpace the limited local resources available.

Some larger philanthropic and private foundation dollars are concentrated in larger metro areas, and competitive Federal and state grants frequently require matching funds or administrative capacity that local organizations may struggle to meet. Meanwhile, the rising cost of housing, staffing shortages, and the need for trauma-informed, wraparound services continue to increase operational expenses. A dedicated, long-term funding strategy and strong partnerships between public agencies, private donors, and service providers will be critical to meeting the goal of reducing homelessness and implementing the elements of this plan.

The plan includes cost estimates when appropriate for each element. Additionally, a listing of potential funding streams is included. Partnership and collaboration between complementary service providers are essential for securing funding for large-scale projects addressing homelessness and housing insecurity. Funders, particularly Federal agencies and national foundations, look for evidence of coordinated, systems-level approaches that avoid duplication and demonstrate impact across multiple sectors. They will look for evidence that service providers have aligned their efforts and shared expertise in housing, mental health, employment, and case management. Through collaboration individual providers make more efficient use of resources.

Collaboration enhances grant competitiveness by showing broad community buy-in, leveraging in-kind support, and demonstrating scalability. In communities like Story County and the City of Ames, where resources are stretched and capacity varies, partnerships are necessary to build the infrastructure, data systems, and service integration that large grants require. Working together allows agencies to meet funders' expectations, deliver better outcomes, and build a more resilient and inclusive system of care.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Combating homelessness requires multifaceted and comprehensive strategies to help those who are currently experiencing homelessness move into permanent housing and achieve housing stability. This should also include strategies to minimize the number of families and individuals who lose their stable housing and become homeless, as well as those who transition into homelessness from institutions such as jails and hospitals. Every day in the United States, families and individuals who have never been homeless lose their housing and are left with no other alternatives than to enter a shelter or find themselves on the streets. Additionally, people with mental illness or substance use disorders find themselves experiencing chronic homelessness, further exacerbating their mental health, physical health or substance use issues. As social determinants of health, housing and homelessness were identified, along with the aforementioned health issues, in the 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment as key concerns in Story County

FROM HOMELESSNESS TO HOUSING

This plan is based on a Housing First model that provides people experiencing homelessness with permanent housing and case management services before addressing the other root causes of their homelessness.

As part of the Housing First model, rapid re-housing interventions connect people experiencing homelessness with permanent housing as quickly as possible through a personalized assistance package that may include time-limited financial aid or targeted supportive services. Rapid re-housing reduces the amount of time an individual or family experiences homelessness and helps alleviate the burden on emergency shelter services. Many rapid re-housing program recipients experience homelessness due to an episodic financial or medical crisis that resulted in a loss of housing and require short-term assistance to return to permanent, stable housing.

When falling on hard times, it is difficult for residents to resolve their homelessness on their own or move forward with addressing other issues effectively until they are housed. Story County recognizes the need for assistance beyond a short emergency shelter stay. Story County is currently exploring the feasibility of a two to three-year pilot program to support case management needs and identify opportunities to collaborate with HOST and other service providers. The envisioned pilot program would allow for a greater focus on empowering unhoused clients and facilitating access to pathways out of homelessness through subsidized transitional housing, self-sufficiency planning, employment assistance, life skills and tenant education, transportation assistance, and other supportive services. Local governments across the country use various iterations of these interventions.

Permanent Supportive Housing program recipients often have a diagnosed disability, including serious mental illness or disabling drug addiction. Deploying a Housing First model and investing in permanent supportive housing can help people experiencing chronic homelessness who suffer from serious mental illness and substance use disorders access and maintain housing over time.

Some individuals experiencing either episodic or chronic homelessness are wary or even fearful of the systems that would assist them. Peer navigators help to overcome these barriers.

Mixed-use housing is a longer-term solution, and a vital component of addressing the housing challenges in Story County, where a low vacancy rate and a high percentage of individuals and

families in need highlight the urgency for diverse housing solutions. By integrating supportive housing with affordable housing and commercial, retail, and community spaces, mixed-use developments can increase the overall housing supply while supporting economic growth and social connectivity. These developments offer flexible housing options that can serve a range of income levels and household types, helping to alleviate pressure on the limited affordable housing stock. In a community like Story County, where housing demand outpaces availability, mixed-use housing provides an innovative and sustainable way to meet both current and future needs.

Case Study of Regional Oregon Continuum of Care (ROCC)

The Rural Oregon Continuum of Care (ROCC) addresses challenges similar to those faced by Story County. ROCC's strategies and successes provide valuable insights that could inform and enhance Story County's, and the Two Rivers Region's approach to affordable housing and homelessness.

- **Coordinated Regional Approach.** ROCC encompasses 26 rural counties and enables the pooling of resources and streamlined service delivery. Story County could adopt a similar regional coordination model to unify efforts across Story County and neighboring regions, enhancing the effectiveness of housing initiatives and coordinating responses among Two Rivers cities and communities.
- **Shared HMIS Access & Training Hub.** ROCC offered centralized HMIS administration and training, removing the need for each provider to maintain their own system or hire data staff.
- **Rotating Leadership Model.** Instead of a single lead agency, ROCC used a rotating fiscal lead and planning body from among its members. This helped avoid power consolidation and built trust, especially among historically underrepresented rural organizations.
- **Joint Grant Applications with Clear Scopes.** ROCC coordinated joint applications with clearly defined scopes of work to avoid overlap. Agencies had to commit to serve specific subpopulations or regions, which helped reduce turf wars.
- **Addressing Rural Homelessness Challenges.** ROCC acknowledges the unique challenges of rural homelessness, including higher rates of unsheltered individuals and limited access to services. By tailoring programs to these specific needs, such as creating non-congregate emergency shelters and integrating healthcare services, ROCC effectively addresses these issues.

[Rural Oregon Continuum of Care - Community Projects](#)

YEAR ONE (FY 2025)

CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ON-THE-GROUND SERVICE PROVIDER PARTNERSHIPS

In November 2024, the City of Ames began convening service providers around possible solutions to addressing homelessness. Some benefits of these meetings include providing a forum for service providers to meet each other face to face and for agencies to form or strengthen connections with each other. One of the greatest needs expressed during these meetings was street outreach and sheltering during severe weather. As a result, various service providers began collaborating on street outreach.

In late 2024, the City of Ames' Mental Health Advocate and the Alternative Response for Community Health (ARCH) started doing street outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness to try and find shelter as the cold weather approached. They started conducting weekly outreach activities using a team approach, specifically going out in groups of 2-3 from various agencies to try and better address needs on the spot. In late winter 2024, this outreach group began branding their efforts as the Homeless Outreach & Support Team (HOST). Agencies that have staff members participating in the weekly outreach activities currently include Mary Greeley Medical Center, Ames Police Department, ARCH, The Salvation Army, Ames Romero House, Ames Community School District, and Story County Alternatives Program. This group continues to expand.

The outreach team members have expressed the importance of having a multi-agency team working on outreach. This approach allows the team to address needs quickly and efficiently. The outreach team approach helps increase outreach worker morale and prevent employee burnout.

Since late-winter 2025, HOST has also expanded their work beyond street outreach to include weekly check-in meetings, inviting all service providers to attend to connect and coordinate on services and resources. These meetings have been widely reported to be effective. This model allows for a more comprehensive approach to providing care and greater collaboration amongst service providers.

A \$11,250 pilot "flex fund" was granted by the Ames City Council to the outreach team to meet the needs encountered during the outreach activities. HOST has expressed this flex fund has allowed them to address needs that typically would be difficult for agencies to do individually in an effective or efficient manner. For example, flex funds allowed the outreach team to purchase a work uniform for an individual experiencing homelessness who recently obtained a job. The flex fund has also been used for various application fees such as fees to obtain IDs or birth certificates.

The flex fund allows the outreach team members to address immediate needs, while enabling them to build trust among people experiencing homelessness.

Milestones

Month	Milestone	Activities
1-4	Evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Continue supporting the existing agencies in collaborating on the outreach activities taking a team approach.2. Continue convening and supporting the weekly service provider meetings to discuss what's happening in the community.3. Gather feedback from HOST participants to learn what's working well and what could be improved. Work towards any improvements needed. Evaluate the flex funds after the pilot phase. Determine if it should continue. If so, identify potential

Month	Milestone	Activities
		fundraising and identify an agency to manage the fund. Establish guidelines and accountability protocols.
5-6	Expansion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the list of partners who participate in HOST as needed. Set up a subcommittee or task force to work on formalizing participation agreements in HOST. This could include identifying resource dedication and establishing clear goals around HOST. Establish guidelines around HOST. Partner with Optima Life Services to provide an additional day of outreach.
7-9	Sustaining a collaborative environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities to offer shared trainings amongst service providers participating in HOST, such as “trauma-informed service delivery” or “best practices in case management”. Convene service providers to share ideas or collaborate on various topics such as working with youth experiencing homelessness, working with families experiencing homelessness, data collection processes, etc. Provide community education around homelessness in Story County.
10-12	Formalize and Enhance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize expectations around participating in the outreach team. Establish performance measures around outreach and create practices and procedures to support tracking data for the performance measure.

WRAPPING UP HOMELESSNESS

The Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH) produces a contest for clients to design art for wrapping paper. They produce the wrapping paper during the holiday season, and it is sold on the streets by people experiencing homelessness, as well as in local shops. Proceeds from the wrapping paper sales support a newspaper dedicated to news and employment opportunities targeted towards those experiencing homelessness. The wrapping paper, and the newspaper, The Cleveland Street Chronicle, have played a vital role in establishing friendly and fruitful relationships between the housed, homeless, and business communities.

For further information, see the following:

[The Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless \(NEOCH\) Project Website](#)
[YouTube Video on a similar initiative in Oklahoma City](#)
[Oklahoma City's Project Website](#)

BUILD PEER NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

A Peer Navigator Program would leverage individuals with lived experience of homelessness to engage and build trust with people currently unhoused. This approach is especially effective in places like public parks and libraries, where individuals often seek refuge but lack access to consistent outreach or support. Peer navigators can serve as a critical bridge to services for those who might otherwise refuse help by offering empathy, lived insight, and real-time referrals with guidance to shelter, health care, ID replacement, mental health services, and daytime facilities. The presence of peer navigators has been shown to help reduce conflict, improve safety, and promote long-term stabilization for those they support.

Peer Navigators can be utilized to build a bridge of trust between individuals in non-traditional settings (parks, libraries) with needed services. They often provide warm handoffs with a direct introduction from a trusted source to case managers and health care providers. They can also distribute basic needs supplies (e.g., hygiene kits, snacks, resource lists), and track their own interactions and referrals to inform system improvements.

Peer Navigators often wear visible identifiers such as vests or badges that signal their official role. These items not only lend credibility but also help establish trust, serving as a calming and de-escalating presence in public spaces like parks and libraries. The program would include trauma-informed training for navigators in topics including local resources, motivational interviewing, conflict de-escalation, forms for tracking contacts, confidentiality, and ethics. Communities often partner with law enforcement and public space staff for orientation and awareness.

In addition to the satisfaction of work supporting others, Peer Navigators earn income that contributes to their own stability and well-being. Further, by helping them establish their own abilities of keeping a work schedule and performing work activities. By enhancing their access to career experience, documented history and recommendations, the program can help create a pathway toward long-term employment.

By partnering with HOST and/or becoming part of the outreach team that conducts weekly outreach activities, the use of Peer Navigators could be even more effective.

Milestones and Activities

Month	Milestone	Activities
1–4	Formation & Orientation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Convene key stakeholders: library leadership, parks and recreation, law enforcement, United Way, TBH, Romero House and others.2. Identify sustainable funding sources.3. Identify host agency (likely an existing shelter or outreach provider).4. Draft job description and qualifications for Peer Navigators.5. Determine schedule and coverage areas (e.g., weekday afternoons at the library, rotating presence at county parks).6. Develop curriculum, training and safety protocols.
5–6	Recruitment & Training	<ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Hire 2–3 part-time Peer Navigators with lived experience and strong communication skills.8. Complete training and orientation.

Month	Milestone	Activities
7–10	Pilot Launch	9. Launch pilot at strategic locations for connecting with unsheltered individuals (ex. service provider offices, the Ames Public Library, food pantries, parks) with hours/visitation. 10. Distribute outreach materials and maintain low-barrier, high-trust engagement. 11. Hold bi-weekly supervision and case conferencing meetings with Navigators
11–12	Evaluation and Expansion	12. Examine the tracking data for number of contacts, referrals made, and any known service connections made. 13. Gather feedback from key stakeholders and navigators. 14. Adjust schedules, staffing, and resource materials based on data collected. 15. Secure ongoing funding for Year 2

Key Parties

- Story County Housing
- City of Ames
- Story County
- United Way of Story County
- ISU Student Government
- HOST
- The Bridge Home, Ames Romero House
- Ames, Bertha Bartlett, Parks, Gilbert, Cambridge Memorial Little Free Library (Dotson), Roland Public Libraries
- Individual(s) with lived experience of homelessness

Costs

Category	Item	Cost Estimate
Personnel	2 Peer Navigators @ \$18/hour, 20 hours/week for 52 weeks	\$37,440
	Program Supervisor (0.25 FTE @ \$30/hour)	\$15,600
	Payroll taxes & benefits (approx. 18%)	\$9,540
Training	Peer navigator training, speakers, materials	\$2,000
Supplies	Outreach kits (hygiene, socks, snacks, resource cards)	\$2,000
	Branded jackets/badges (identification & safety)	\$200
Transportation	Bus passes, mileage reimbursements	\$2,000
Technology	Cell phones with monthly plans, tablets for data tracking	\$2,400
Administration	Insurance, reporting systems	\$3,000
Contingency	Flex fund for urgent client needs	\$2,000
Total Estimated Budget		\$78,180

Outcomes and Measures

- Number of individuals served, number of referrals made and accepted.
- Decrease in park incidents related to homelessness, public camping.
- Decrease in public camping in downtown areas and library vicinity.
- Community satisfaction with libraries, parks, and other public spaces.

EXPAND IOWAWORKS MOBILE WORKFORCE CENTER JOB FAIRS TO INCLUDE SOAR AND BENEFIT APPLICATIONS ASSISTANCE.

The IowaWORKS Mobile Workforce Center reaches out to job seekers in underserved and rural communities across Iowa and visits Story County locations, including the Ames Public and the Roland-Story High School. To enhance the impact of this existing service, the County could partner with IowaWORKS to incorporate SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) trained staff and benefit navigation services at the job fair locations. This integration would help individuals access income supports such as SSI/SSDI benefits, SNAP, Medicaid, other public benefits, and ID replacement, alongside employment opportunities.

This expansion aligns with a Housing First and recovery-oriented approach, recognizing that access to income and benefits is a foundational step toward housing stability, employment, and self-sufficiency. By co-locating these supports, both Story County providers and the Mobile Workforce Job Fairs can enhance their reach.

Story County is currently coordinating with IowaWORKS to bring a mobile unit to the Nevada City Hall next month and will engage local employers to participate. Local providers with experience in benefits applications and assistance could participate starting immediately.

Milestones and Activities

Month	Milestone	Activities
1	Formation & Orientation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Convene planning team with IowaWORKS, SOAR-trained providers, CoC, and other stakeholders such as service providers, library or other location staff.2. Identify priority locations for pilot job fairs based on need, existing IowaWORKS schedule.3. Develop outreach materials, intake forms, and a shared service referral process.
2–8	Pilot Launch	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Launch pilot events in 3–5 communities with SOAR/benefit support on-site (based on the availability of the unit).
9–12	Evaluation and Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Collect feedback from attendees and partners.6. Adjust processes, expand outreach, and prepare sustainability plan.

Key Parties

- IowaWORKS
- CoC SOAR Leads/Coordinators
- Story County Board of Supervisors
- City of Ames
- The Bridge Home, Romero House, and other HOST members
- Ames, Bertha Bartlett, Parks, Gilbert, Cambridge Memorial Little Free Library (Dotson), Roland Public Libraries
- Individual(s) with lived experience of homelessness
- Other stakeholders

Costs

Category	Item	Cost Estimate
Personnel	Existing County staff for coordination (\$100 per hour/8 hours per month); CoC or Provider staff (\$75 per hour/8 hours per month) for 52 weeks	\$156,800
	Payroll taxes & benefits (approx. 18%)	\$28,224
Supplies	Outreach kits (hygiene, socks, snacks, resource cards)	\$2,000
Transportation	Bus passes, mileage reimbursements	\$2,000
Administration	Insurance, reporting systems	\$2,000
Contingency	Flex fund for urgent client needs	\$2,000
Total Estimated Budget		\$193,024

Outcomes and Measures

- Increased number of successful SOAR applications submitted at job fairs.
- Improved participant access to benefits (SNAP, Medicaid, etc.).
- Increased connections to employment and training resources.
- Stronger partnerships between IowaWORKS, CoC, SOAR providers, and County.

EXPAND EMERGENCY SHELTER CAPACITY

Story County faces a critical and immediate need to expand its emergency shelter capacity in response to rising housing instability, increasing unsheltered homelessness, and the urgent need for reliable, all-weather shelter options. Currently, The Bridge Home (TBH), the primary general emergency shelter provider, is undergoing a transitional period, with the Central Iowa Shelter & Services (CISS) temporarily overseeing operations under a 100-day Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This transition presents both a challenge and an opportunity to strengthen the local shelter system without placing prescriptive expectations on any single provider.

To ensure community needs are met during and beyond this transitional period, it is essential for Story County stakeholders to maintain clear communication and collaboration, ensuring uninterrupted emergency shelter access for individuals and families across the region.

Beyond stabilizing the existing shelter services, as the data suggests, the expansion of emergency shelter capacity is a critical, immediate priority that requires coordinated action and diverse funding sources to support both infrastructure and case management services. While The Bridge Home remains the lead agency for shelter operations, this plan focuses on systems-level investments and partnerships that will stabilize and expand shelter access. This approach allows for flexibility, responsiveness, and shared responsibility as the community works together to meet the needs of its most vulnerable residents.

Milestones and Activities

Month	Milestone	Activities
1–3	Transition Stabilization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support continued shelter operations under CISS oversight 2. Convene stakeholders around ideas to expand increased emergency shelter capacity.

Month	Milestone	Activities
4–12	Communications	3. Update community on the status of the existing shelter providers including, TBH, ACCESS and YSS.

Costs

Costs to be determined by shelter providers and community partners.

Key Parties

Role	Agency	Responsibilities
Lead Agency	The Bridge Home	Managing shelter operations and internal enhancements, exploring expansion, data tracking and reporting.
Partner Agencies	Central Iowa Shelter & Services (CISS)	Interim collaboration and support, technical guidance during transition
	City of Ames	Funding, oversight, technical assistance
	Story County Government	Funding, coordination with rural and Countywide service providers
	United Way of Story County	Financial support, volunteer coordination
	ASSET	Ongoing dialogue, consideration of grant funding, funder engagement
	Local faith communities	Temporary overflow space

Outcomes and Measures

- Increased shelter access year-round, with nightly shelter capacity.
- No incidents of shelter denial due to capacity during declared weather emergencies during the winter of FY 2026.
- Improved resident satisfaction with shelter services.
- All shelter residents offered case management or referrals to housing, mental health, or benefits.
- Continued support with housing applications or benefit enrollment (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid, SOAR).
- Accurate and verifiable reporting on shelter usage, capacity, and gaps.

PROVIDE ROBUST CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES ACROSS THE COUNTY

Case management is critical for moving individuals or families experiencing homelessness into stable housing. Agencies providing services are currently offering case management to clients on a limited basis. HUD guidelines suggest that for rapid rehousing case management a ratio of approximately 25 to 35 clients per manager, and for intensive case management needed for permanent supportive housing or those who are chronically homeless, the ratio of 10 to 15 clients per manager is recommended⁶. Housing first model proponents recommend low ratios to ensure consistent, hands-on, interdisciplinary support, often including mental health and medical services. For high-need clients, 8 to 12 clients per manager may be needed.

Story County has begun exploring ways to support case management, especially for agencies that do not directly provide shelter but may interact with individuals or families on the verge of homelessness. By intervening early and providing some case management, becoming unsheltered could be prevented. Exploration includes the consideration of a case manager/housing coordinator housed in General Assistance with Story County. A position could supplement case management needs in the community and serve as a community facilitator to identify affordable housing opportunities. Additionally, this position could convene service providers to promote shared learning around their case management practices, thereby building a community of learning among service providers. An effort like this would require collaboration and would be further strengthened by funding partners.

Milestones and Activities

Month	Milestone	Activities
1-2	Establishing the position	1. Develop a job description and pay range 2. Develop objectives for this position with community input 3. Identify potential funders to support this position
3-4	Hire and onboard the individual	4. Hire the individual and allow them time to get acquainted with community partners
5-12	Began Operations	5. Convene service providers around case management practices and create a community of learning. 6. Convene stakeholders to identify affordable housing opportunities. 7. Supplement case management in the community.

Costs

Category	Item	Cost Estimate
Personnel	One Position, Salary to be determined.	\$55,000-65,0000
	Payroll taxes & benefits	\$20,000-40,000
Total Estimated Budget		\$75,000-105,000

⁶ <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3891/rapid-re-housing-brief/>

Key Parties:

- Story County
- City of Ames
- United Way of Story County
- Other cities in Story County
- Health care institutions
- Iowa State University Student Services

YEAR TWO (FY 2026)

CREATE A TASK FORCE ON HOMELESSNESS

A multi-sector Task Force on Homelessness would help guide policy development and funding strategies to address the root causes and local conditions perpetuating homelessness and housing insecurity in Story County. This task force would include representatives from city and county governments, service providers, landlords and property managers, health and mental health services, law enforcement, education, nonprofit organizations, people with lived experience of homelessness, and other key stakeholders. It would be distinguished from existing groups such as ASSET or HOST through its focus on policy goals and funding procurement.

The primary goals of the task force would be to:

- Assess ongoing needs, gaps, and duplication in services, assisting with coordination through partnership with existing providers and HOST.
- Establish a community vision and key performance indicators around addressing homelessness.
- Engage the community through listening sessions, public input, messaging and communications intended to create understanding and empathy between the housed community and residents experiencing homelessness.
- Develop and approve a comprehensive set of policy recommendations, responding to emerging issues such as the recent debate on camping bans, weigh the use of tiny homes as part of an overall strategy, and zoning and land use as barriers to affordable housing.
- Identify sustainable funding mechanisms and opportunities for leveraging state and Federal resources.
- Coordinate teams of providers in collaborative grant applications.
- Align with the Iowa Balance of State Continuum of Care for increased communication and visibility of Story County's needs.
- Coordinate with existing regional and statewide planning efforts.

Story County has ad hoc workgroups that have formed around homelessness that vary in purpose and scope. When implementing this recommendation, consideration should be given to building on the work of any existing known groups. For instance, Mary Greeley Medical Center has a Community of Excellence workgroup. The goal of this workgroup is to understand the health needs in Story County, identify gaps, and make recommendations. Priority areas of focus for this group reflect the topics in the 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), which includes mental health, access to health care services, and other health-related indicators, along with social determinants of health such as housing, food security, income, and transportation. This workgroup currently has a wide range of representatives attending.

If appropriate, the community could consider 1) evaluating utilizing this existing group to focus on homelessness or 2) evaluating the creation of a subcommittee from this group to focus on homelessness and inviting other stakeholders to participate. It is possible that this group may not be the right fit for this recommendation so the community should also be prepared to explore creating an entirely new task force separate from this workgroup or any other existing workgroups. Another option is a countywide group that includes representatives from cities within the County, law enforcement, and County Supervisors. **Milestones and Activities**

Month	Milestone	Activities
1–2	Formation & Orientation	1. Finalize task force membership, mission statement, schedule of meetings. 2. Develop a system of rotating leadership with clear responsibilities for each leadership term.
3–4	Data Review & Needs Assessment	3. Examine housing needs, homelessness trends and establish priority actions for the coming year.
5–8	Stakeholder Engagement	4. Public listening sessions, focus groups with service users, employers, or other surveys of providers to develop community messaging campaign. 5. With public input, create a community vision around addressing homelessness and develop key community performance indicators.
9–10	Community Communications and Action Plan	6. Implement a community communications strategy to inform the public of the priorities and actions being undertaken.
11–12	Funding Strategy Development	7. Create subcommittees on funding sources, develop teams of providers and others to enhance funding applications, conduct cost analysis of proposed solutions, make recommendations for local/state/Federal funding applications and alignment.

Key Parties

- Story County Housing Trust
- City of Ames
- Story County
- United Way of Story County
- Story County Sheriff's Office
- Ames Public Schools
- Story County Attorney
- Nevada Community School District
- Other Story County School Districts
- Ames Police Department
- Mary Greeley Medical Center
- Story County Medical Center
- Primary Health Care
- McFarland Clinic
- Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA)
- Iowa Department of Health and Human Services
- ISU Student Government
- The Bridge Home
- Ames Romero House
- Food at First (Ames and Nevada)
- Ames Regional Economic Alliance
- Story County Economic Development Group
- Providers, stakeholders from neighboring counties
- Individual(s) with lived experience of homelessness
- Central Iowa Regional Housing Authority (CIRHA)
- Ames and Story County Libraries
- Local faith communities

Costs

Staff time of approximately four to eight hours per month per organization, increasing for key organizations applying for funding later in Year One.

Outcomes and Measures

- Clear community goals around addressing homelessness and key performance indicators.
- Stronger advocacy capacity for Story County to compete for state/Federal grants.
- An informed and engaged community with shared ownership of solutions.
- Minimum of one state, Federal or private foundation grant application with at least two providers involved in developing proposal, service delivery and funding.

SUPPORT DEVELOPING EFFORTS TO PROVIDE ALL-WEATHER DAYTIME REFUGE

Story County experiences a wide range of weather extremes throughout the year, with winter temperatures often dipping below zero and heavy snowfall, increasing the demand for emergency shelter and heating assistance. Summers often bring high heat and humidity, with temperatures sometimes exceeding 90°F, which can be dangerous for vulnerable populations without access to air conditioning or stable housing. Severe, and often unpredictable weather events such as thunderstorms, high winds, hail, and occasional tornadoes also pose seasonal threats. These weather conditions place additional pressure on local housing and emergency response systems, highlighting the critical need for year-round shelter access and resilient infrastructure for those experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

The weather extremes are dangerous for those experiencing homelessness, as well as many other residents who may be housed but find it difficult to heat or cool their homes, or whose homes are impacted by weather events.

In Story County, there is a growing need to address the presence of individuals experiencing homelessness in public parks and around the public library. It is important to maintain public spaces so that they are accessible to all residents, however, they are not designed to meet basic human needs such as shelter, bathing or laundry services. The extended use of public spaces for housing needs often leads to increased tensions between housed and unhoused residents, as well as sanitation concerns, and safety challenges for both those experiencing homelessness and the housed public.

Relocating individuals experiencing homelessness from these areas is part of ensuring they are connected to appropriate housing options, outreach services, and case management. This approach not only supports community well-being but also ensures that public spaces remain welcoming and functional for everyone.

Story County has several options for daytime use and the ability to expand capacity to address weather conditions and emergencies. Funding streams are needed to maintain and improve the existing facilities and expand capacity to address weather conditions, develop and distribute information about the location and availability of services, and to hire and train peer-navigators to help individuals find their way to facilities (see Recommendation 3.)

To provide daytime relief from weather conditions, the community could identify rotating multi-use spaces such as a high school gym, community center or faith-based location.

Milestones and Activities

Month	Milestone	Activities
1–4	Formation & Orientation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify current providers offering partial or informal daytime refuge (e.g., TBH, Romero House, Ames Public Library, churches and other forms of shelter) and explore other community partners who may be able to assist. 2. Identify zoning or policy constraints that could affect opening or expanding daytime refuge sites. 3. Draft a preliminary service model (staffing, hours, locations, wraparound services). 4. Identify funding streams.
5–8	Logistics and Partnerships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Identify lead agencies for service coordination and facility operation. 6. Secure location(s) for daytime refuge (either new site or extended hours at an existing facility). 7. Formalize partnership agreements (MOUs) among providers, especially regarding staffing, referrals, and transport. 8. Develop schedule for rotating availability, if applicable, with expanded capacity during high-risk weather months (e.g. December, January, February, July, August.) 9. Launch pilot daytime refuge program with defined hours and services during extreme weather.
9–12	Review, Evaluation and Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Collect and analyze data from the pilot (usage, referrals, service gaps, feedback). 11. Host a community roundtable to share lessons learned and gather public feedback. 12. Refine service model and develop long-term operations planning and budget. 13. Secure commitments from funders and partners for Year 2 operations.

Key Parties

- Story County Housing
- City of Ames
- Story County
- United Way of Story County
- ISU Student Government
- The Bridge Home
- Ames Romero House
- Food at First
- Other providers, stakeholders
- Individual(s) with lived experience of homelessness

Costs

Potential costs associated with developing a strategy for daytime refuge:

Category	Item	Cost Estimate
Planning	Staff hours for planning and implementation (20 hours per week for 3 months).	\$4,500
Capacity Expansion	Temporary overflow space rental (church, community building) for extreme weather days	\$4,000
	Cots, mats, chairs, PPE, warm/cooling supplies	\$4,500
Outreach & Information	Printed materials (flyers, service maps, multilingual resource guides)	\$2,500
Administration	Program coordination, scheduling, data tracking	\$3,500
Contingency	Flex fund for urgent client needs	\$2,000
Total Estimated Budget		\$21,000

Outcomes and Measures

- Number of individuals served.
- Cost per person served.
- Increased access to public spaces for all residents.
- Decrease in park incidents and library staff time devoted to serving individuals who are homeless with living situations/needs.
- Community satisfaction with availability of all-weather refuge.

ALIGN WITH OR SUPPLEMENT LOCAL FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY HOUSING

ASSET currently distributes funding for human service needs in Story County. The funds are used for a wide range of human service needs. A focus on investing in early interventions and housing stability could make a significant difference in reducing the number of people who become unhoused. Early intervention investments could include funding to assist with rental arrears, utility shutoffs, security deposits, or short-term emergency lodging.

Prioritizing funding of services aimed at homelessness prevention and supplementing the funding will serve the residents of the community by offering rapid, flexible, and low-barrier financial support to individuals and families at imminent risk of housing loss. This form of funding assistance provides a significant return on investment, as it is more cost-effective to prevent homelessness than to respond to it once it occurs.

An intentional effort to seek other funders beyond ASSET to support these early interventions can also have community-wide benefits.

Given the high percentage of renters who are cost-burdened in Story County, spending more than 30% of their income on housing, it is necessary to intervene in housing instability before individuals and families become homeless. Additionally, disproportionately impacted populations such as seniors, single-parent households, and people with disabilities are able to access timely support and avoid shelter entry.

Milestones and Activities

Month	Milestone	Activities
1–3	Orientation and Alignment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Convene a workgroup with city officials, county officials, funders to inventory and assess existing preventative strategies.2. Identify strategies that are effective.3. Identify additional funding sources (e.g., general funds, philanthropic grants) to expand ability to sustain the program and reach more Story County residents.
4–8	Plan for Expansion	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Develop marketing campaign with referral pathways through landlords, schools, social service agencies.
9–12	Public Campaign	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Ongoing monitoring, early outcomes review.6. Adjust processes, expand outreach, and prepare sustainability plan.

Key Parties

- ASSET Funders and Board Members
- Service providers offering preventative services
- Health care institutions
- Large businesses
- School districts

Costs

If funding were expanded, costs may include the following estimation:

Category	Item	Cost Estimate
Administration	Existing County or City staff for coordination (@ \$100 per hour/2 hours per month) for one year	\$2,400
Funds	Supplementary funding, if available (e.g., 4 awards per year of \$2,500 each)	\$10,000
Total Estimated Budget		\$12,400

Outcomes and Measures

- Financial savings due to decreased evictions and homelessness

YEAR THREE (FY 2027)

PLAN AND FUND PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

With an increasing number of residents struggling to find safe, stable, and affordable housing, and a vacancy rate that continues to fall short of meeting demand, the county must take bold, coordinated action to address its housing crisis in a way that enables long-term, stable housing for low-income residents and those in need of supportive services.

Ames currently houses the primary emergency shelter in the Two Rivers region, placing a disproportionate burden on one city while regional needs increase. At the same time, many residents, including seniors, individuals living with disabilities, and families earning below 30% of the area median income, face barriers to securing and maintaining housing. For many, housing instability is compounded by complex challenges like mental illness, chronic health conditions, trauma, and poverty.

A mixed-use housing development could combine affordable units, permanent supportive housing, and wraparound services. It would offer seniors the opportunity to age in place, give vulnerable families a secure environment to raise their children, and ensure that people exiting homelessness are not simply housed, but supported with dignity.

The inclusion of mixed-use commercial and community space such as a community health clinic, food access hub, or early childhood education center would further strengthen the project's impact by anchoring essential services.

This project is also an opportunity to leverage the unique strengths of Story County. Through the ASSET process, there is already a powerful model of collaboration among local funders that can be used to ensure service funding is aligned and sustainable. By combining this coordination with local leadership, Federal, state, and philanthropic resources, Story County can lead the way in building both affordable housing and a stronger, more inclusive future.

The site would meet the needs for approximately 20–30 units of permanent supportive housing, 30–40 units of affordable housing for residents with incomes less than 30% of the area median income, 30–40 units of senior affordable housing. The task force established in Year 2 may also wish to consider onsite wraparound service center (health care, case management, meals) and some portion of mixed-use commercial space (e.g., community clinic, food co-op, daycare).

Milestones and Activities

Month	Milestone	Activities
1–3	Organization and Stakeholder Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Form a steering committee of City of Ames, Story County, other Two Rivers City and County officials, nonprofits, and developers.2. Hold community listening sessions regarding needs, mixed use preferences, location preferences.3. Secure Seed Funding for Pre-Development (\$250,000-750,000)
4–12	Planning and Funding applications	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Conduct housing market study. Identify potential sites. Estimate unit mix, zoning requirements, and infrastructure needs.5. Identify funding sources for construction (e.g., Federal, philanthropic grants).

Month	Milestone	Activities
		6. Draft development concept with architects and service providers. Develop pro forma and preliminary cost estimates. 7. Apply for LIHTC, HOME, ARPA, CDBG, FHLB, and foundation grant funds. 8. Coordinate with ASSET to align service funding.
12–24	Construction	9. Receive grant funds. 10. Secure zoning and planning approvals. 11. Develop architectural designs and contracts. 12. Begin construction. 13. Begin tenant outreach. 14. Launch onsite service center.

Costs

Category	Item	Cost Estimate
Administration and Planning	Staff time at coordinating agencies (4 people, .25 FTE)	\$200,000
	Pre-development (design, feasibility, legal)	\$750,000
Development and Construction	Land acquisition	\$500,000–\$1M
	Construction (80–100 units)	\$20M–\$25M
	Service center buildout	\$1.5M–\$2M
	Soft costs (permits, insurance, admin)	\$1.5M
Sustainability	Operating & Service Endowment (5 years)	\$2.5M–\$3M
Total Estimated Budget		\$26–\$34M

Potential Funding Sources

- **Federal & State:**
 - Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)
 - HOME & CDBG Funds (through IFA or HUD)
 - HUD Section 202 (senior housing)
- **Local:**
 - City, County general fund contributions
 - Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for site infrastructure
 - ASSET for service operations funding
 - Mary Greeley, other health systems and local employers
- **Private Foundations and Philanthropic Organizations:**
 - Iowa Community Foundations
 - United Way of Story County

Key Parties

Partner	Role
Task Force on Homelessness and Affordable Housing	Coordination, public awareness and information campaigns
City of Ames	Zoning, infrastructure, local match

Story County	Coordination, land and/or financial contributions
Other Two Rivers Counties and Cities	Coordination, financial contribution, ongoing commitment to service provision
ASSET	Coordination, funding of services, grant application assistance
Housing Developer (e.g., affordable housing developer or P3)	Lead on financing, design, and construction
Nonprofits (e.g., Bridge Home, United Way, Salvation Army, Food at First and other nonprofit providers)	Onsite services, case management
Residents and Advocacy Groups	Community feedback and outreach

Hennepin County, Minnesota successfully integrated a new shelter operated by Catholic Charities, a regional provider. The Higher Ground Minneapolis shelter replaced an aging facility with management that was not fulfilling funder expectations and introduced a more comprehensive housing model with links to services and long-term housing options.

Their project included:

- Strong collaboration with Local Government & Community Organizations, and the alignment of funding and policy frameworks.
- Community Engagement, strengthened by an emphasis on housing seniors.
- Engagement with residents, businesses, and stakeholders and outreach to address concerns about safety, impact, and shelter operations.
- Innovative Shelter Model that includes tiered housing, offering emergency shelter, pay-for-stay beds, and permanent supportive housing within the same facility. This model encourages long-term stability by providing different levels of support under one roof.
- The shelter integrated healthcare services, employment resources, and case management, collaborating with Hennepin County's social service programs.
- This case study demonstrates how to integrate a new multicounty provider into an existing provider community by offering a comprehensive model that has clear benefits for both residents experiencing homelessness and the broader community.

POTENTIAL FUNDERS

Funding for homelessness services is typically sourced from a combination of Federal, state, local, and private entities. This section includes a listing of potential funding sources available to individuals experiencing homelessness and providers of homelessness services in the City of Ames and Story County.

NATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

These foundations often fund systemic approaches, innovation, capacity-building, and pilot programs:

The Centene Foundation

The Centene Foundation and Iowa Total Care committed \$2.5 million for Central Iowa Shelter & Services (CISS) to create an on-the-ground Housing Command Center (HCC) and a mobile application to address homelessness.

Website: <https://www.centene.com/who-we-are/centene-foundation.html>

The Kresge Foundation

Focus: Housing stability, health + housing integration, racial equity.

Website: kresge.org

Melville Charitable Trust

One of the few foundations focused solely on ending homelessness in the U.S.

Website: melvilletrust.org

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Focus: Housing as a social determinant of health, systems change.

Website: rwjf.org

The Hilton Foundation

Strong focus on permanent supportive housing, especially for youth and veterans.

Website: hiltonfoundation.org

The Ford Foundation

Focus on systemic change, including housing justice.

Website: fordfoundation.org

FEDERAL AND STATE PROGRAMS

- A. **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG):** Administered by the Iowa Finance Authority, ESG funds are designed to help individuals and families regain housing stability after experiencing homelessness.

Eligible Applicants:

- Local governments (not to include local public housing authorities)
- Nonprofit service agencies

Eligible Programming

- Street Outreach
- Shelter
- Homelessness Prevention
- Rapid Rehousing

Application Process

- Periodic competitive application
- May be a Combined application with Emergency Solutions Grant and Shelter Assistance Fund programs

- B. **Iowa Rapid Rehousing Project:** A pilot initiative funded by over \$21 million from the state's Federal Emergency Rental Assistance program allocation, aiming to assist families and individuals in quickly exiting homelessness and returning to permanent housing. Individuals seeking assistance must apply through a provider and the coordinated entry system.

To qualify for Coordinated Entry, individuals or families must fall into one of the categories below:

- Literally Homeless (This includes sleeping outdoors or another place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or leaving a program/institution without a fixed housing destination)
- At Imminent Risk of becoming Homeless (You will lose housing in the next 14 days, have nowhere else to go, and cannot obtain other housing without assistance.)
- Fleeing or Attempting to Flee from Domestic Violence (*This includes fleeing from sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous conditions related to violence, making it unsafe to return to your primary residence.*)

- C. **Iowa HOME-ARP Program:** The HOME-ARP program was created by the American Rescue Plan (ARP) to reduce homelessness and increase housing stability. IFA was designated approximately \$29 million in HOME-ARP funds in a one-time allocation.

Available Funds include Supportive Services (\$4.5 million), Nonprofit Operating (\$1 million) and Nonprofit Capacity Building (\$1 million).

Qualified Populations:

- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Individuals at risk of homelessness
- Persons fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking.
- Other populations for which providing supportive services or assistance would prevent homelessness or would serve those at greatest risk of housing instability.

Applicants

- Nonprofit and for-profit entities
- Local governments

- D. **Permanent Supportive Housing Fund:** The intent of the Iowa Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Fund is to support PSH operational needs for eligible nonprofit PSH providers in good standing with the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA).

The Iowa PSH Fund is not intended to be an annually budgeted funding resource for PSH operations but rather a potential resource that may be available in times of operating deficit on a fiscal year by fiscal year basis. Expenditures from the Iowa PSH Fund for Operating Deficit Relief will be limited to the following general parameters.

Eligible Activities

1. Eligible Applicant may request up to \$50,000 in PSH Operating Deficit Relief following a fiscal year in which the PSH project or the PSH units within a larger housing project result in an operating deficit to the Eligible Applicant's operating budget. The amount of PSH Operating Deficit Relief awarded by IFA shall not exceed the lesser of \$50,000 or the actual amount of the operating deficit during the fiscal year.
 2. Beginning with the fiscal year operating budget ending on or after July 1, 2023, an Eligible Applicant may submit an Iowa PSH Fund application to IFA for PSH Operating Deficit Relief annually, subject to available funding.
 3. The Eligible Applicant must submit a copy of the PSH project's unaudited financial statement for the previous, current, and following fiscal year, as available, for review and underwriting by IFA. The statement submitted for the following fiscal year may be a proposed operating budget for the PSH project's anticipated income and operating expenses during the next fiscal year. For PSH units within a larger housing project, the unaudited financial statement must be specific to the revenue and expenses the Eligible Applicant incurred during the fiscal year for the PSH units related to operations, supportive services, administration, and/or debt service, as applicable.
 4. PSH Operating Deficit Relief applications will be due annually by the application submission deadline established by IFA to reflect any operating deficit the Eligible Applicant experienced during the fiscal year ending on or after the previous July 1, based upon the PSH project or PSH units unaudited financial statement.
 5. IFA reserves the right to award PSH Operating Deficit Relief Grants in prorated amounts lower than the applicable maximum award amount based upon the total funding available within the Iowa PSH Fund for that purpose.
 6. At IFA's sole discretion as approved by the Director and subject to available funding within the Iowa PSH Fund at any point in time, IFA may award emergency PSH Operating Deficit Relief to an Eligible Applicant in cases of extreme financial hardship that threatens the ability of the Eligible Applicant to sustain PSH operations, placing PSH tenants at risk of losing their housing stability.
- E. **Shelter Assistance Fund:** The Shelter Assistance Fund is a state-funded program that supports the costs and operations of homeless and domestic violence shelters.

Applicants

- Local governments
- Nonprofit service agencies

Projects

- Homelessness and domestic violence shelter operations
- Essential services for the homeless
- Evaluation and reporting of services for the homeless

- F. [Local Housing Trust Fund:](#) The Iowa legislature created the Local Housing Trust Fund Program to allow certified Local Housing Trust Funds to efficiently fulfill unique local affordable housing needs throughout the state. The program receives at least 60% of the State Housing Trust Fund allocation to provide grants for organizations certified by the Iowa Finance Authority as a Local Housing Trust Fund.

Eligible Projects

Awards from the Local Housing Trust Fund Program must be used for the development or preservation of affordable housing for eligible recipients. Each Local Housing Trust Fund outlines its eligible projects in an approved Housing Assistance Plan. Examples include:

- New Construction
- Acquisition and/or remodeling of existing property
- Local down payment assistance programs
- Home rehabilitation
- Housing for persons with disabilities
- Homelessness assistance programs

Eligible Recipients

All Local Housing Trust Fund dollars must benefit low-income households at or below 80% of the area median income, while at least 30% of the funds must be used to serve extremely low-income households at or below 30% of the area median income.

- G. [Project-Based Housing Program:](#) The Project-Based Housing Program assists locally supported affordable housing projects that are not eligible to receive funding under a Local Housing Trust Fund's Housing Assistance Plan.

Program Requirements

For projects benefiting eligible recipients, program funding must not exceed 75% of the total project budget, excluding administrative and developer fee line items. For affordable housing projects benefiting extremely low-income recipients, program funding may not exceed 90% of the total project budget, excluding administrative and developer fee line items.

Eligible Applicants

- Cities and counties
- Nonprofit housing organizations
- For-profit housing development organizations
- Recognized neighborhood associations
- Economic development organizations
- Homeless service providers
- Transitional housing providers
- Domestic violence shelters
- Councils of governments

Eligible Uses

- New construction of affordable housing
- Acquisition or adaptive reuse projects to develop new affordable housing opportunities
- Rehabilitation or home modification by a Qualified Nonprofit to provide for increased accessibility in existing housing units serving Extremely Low-Income lowans
- Development of affordable housing units serving homeless households (including emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter, and transitional housing units)
- To assist in the development of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit units reserved for Extremely Low-Income lowans
- Lead hazard reduction in affordable housing to be completed by certified lead professionals and contractors certified in safe work practices
- Foreclosure-prevention, anti-predatory lending, or homebuyer education counseling, provided through an organization that is a part of the Iowa Mortgage Help initiative or has received certification through the National Industry Standards for Homeownership Education and Counseling

CITY OF AMES FUNDING PROGRAMS

- A. [City of Ames Contingency Fund](#): The Ames City Council has allocated funds to support homelessness initiatives. For example, \$15,000 was designated for partnerships with ISU Extension and Outreach and for the pilot flex fund for the Outreach team.
- B. [Story County ASSET \(Analysis of Social Services Evaluation Team\)](#): A collaborative effort that allocates funding to human services programs, including those addressing homelessness. ASSET is funded through [The City of Ames](#), ISU Student Government, Story County, and United Way of Story County.
- C. [Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\) Program](#). As an entitlement community, the city receives annual CDBG dollars. The funded activities must meet the following three national objectives: 1) benefit persons of low- and moderate-income, 2) aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight, and 3) meet other community development needs of particular urgency. Program activities include projects related to Housing, Public Facilities, Public Services, and Economic Development.
- D. [HOME Investment Partnership Program \(HOME\)](#). As an entitlement community, the city receives annual HOME dollars. The funded activities must meet the following three national objectives: 1) benefit persons of low- and moderate-income, 2) aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight, and 3) meet other community development needs of particular urgency. Program activities include projects related to Homeowner Rehabilitation, Homeowner (New Construction and/or Downpayment), Rental Development (New Construction or Rehabilitation), or Rental Subsidy (Tenant-based Rental Assistance (TBRA)).
- E. [HOME-ARP Funds](#): Funding available through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 is available to the City of Ames until September 2030. Used to provide affordable housing, services, and shelter to people experiencing homelessness.

Eligible activities that may be funded with HOME-ARP include:

- Preservation and Production of affordable rental housing

- Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)
- Housing Related Supportive Services, Homeless Prevention Services, and Housing Counseling
- Purchase and Development of Non-Congregate Shelters (NCS)

Funds must primarily benefit individuals and households in the following qualifying populations:

- Experiencing homelessness (as defined in 24 CFR 91.5 “Homeless” (1), (2), or (3))
- At risk of homelessness (as defined in 24 CFR 91.5 “At risk of homelessness”)
- Fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking (as defined in 24 CFR 5.2003)
- Other populations with high risk of housing instability (including highly cost-burdened low-income households, households who have moved two or more times in the last 60 days, and households living in a hotel/motel)

STORY COUNTY GOVERNMENT FUNDING PROGRAMS

- A. **Story County ASSET: (Analysis of Social Services Evaluation Team):** A collaborative effort that allocates funding to human services programs, including those addressing homelessness. ASSET is funded through The City of Ames, ISU Student Government, **Story County**, and United Way of Story County.
- B. **Story County General Assistance Program:** To assist Story County citizens with accessing resources and services, allowing them the opportunity to improve their quality of life. Any Story County resident in need of an emergency rent or utility payment may apply.

In conjunction with Good Neighbor Emergency Assistance and The Salvation Army, Story County residents seek assistance through a Centralized Intake Process for emergency rent and utility assistance. Applications can be made at Story County General Assistance, one application, one location for assistance from multiple agencies. Service Coordination is also available to assist interested applicants in connecting to other resources, services and supports.

Offers assistance with:

- Rent
 - Utilities
 - Burial Assistance
 - Transportation for transient individuals
 - Other basic needs on a case-by-case-basis
- C. **Story County Veterans Affairs:** The Story County Veterans Assistance Programs are funded by Story County along with an annual appropriation of \$10,000 per year from the state legislators. Help with rent or mortgage payments, utilities, food and provisions, and other services are available, subject to eligibility requirements.
 - D. **Homes for Iowa** is 501c3 organization with a mission to provide state of the art building trades training and re-entry employment assistance to reduce recidivism while constructing quality homes for sale to Iowans across the state. In Story County, the Story County Housing Trust has worked with local partners, including Story County and local communities, to place new single-

family Homes for Iowa houses in areas where development is needed. After utilities are connected and a garage is built, the houses are offered for sale. The houses are meant to be affordable, and the buyer must meet income limitations.

STORY COUNTY ORGANIZATIONS AND NONPROFITS

- A. **[The Bridge Home](#)**: Based in Ames, this organization offers shelter and support services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Their funding comes from private grants, sponsorships, and community donations.
- B. **[Good Neighbor Emergency Assistance](#)**: Provides emergency assistance for Story County residents, including support for rent and utilities, funded through community contributions and partnerships. Based in Ames. Emergency assistance is available to Story County residents and supported by Story County faith communities, community grants, community organizations, and individual donations.
- C. **[The Salvation Army](#)**: Homelessness prevention in the form of deposit, rent, and utility assistance. Must apply through Story County General Assistance and sign release of information. Available to Story County residents.
- D. **[St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, Love Your Neighbor](#)**: Rent, deposit, and utility assistance available through Story County General Assistance and MICA (if helping with utilities).
- E. **[St. Patrick's Catholic Church Good Samaritan Fund](#)**: Rent and utility assistance up to \$300 .
- F. **[YSS](#)**: Youth shelter for youth and adults under the age of 25 .
- G. **[Cornerstone Church, Home for Awhile](#)**: Provides 90 day transitional housing. Limited to 3 apartments, one becoming available each month. Household must include at least one child. Must be willing to meet the requirements and follow the rules of the program.
- H. **[Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc.](#)** An organization in Ames that may be able to help with housing resources for families in Hardin, Marshall, Poweshiek, Story, and Tama counties.
- I. **[Ames and Gilbert Christ Community Church Caring Fund](#)**: Rent or utility assistance. Walk-ins only on the second and fourth Wednesdays, Limited to once in a 12-month period and funding availability. Not available to full-time ISU students.

COMMUNITY-BASED FUNDING PROGRAMS

- A. **[CIRHA](#)**: The Central Iowa Regional Housing Authority (CIRHA) offers a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program aimed at assisting families participating in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program to achieve economic independence. This voluntary program combines financial incentives with personalized support services to help families improve their quality of life and work toward self-sufficiency. The program serves the following six counties: Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, and Story.
- B. **[Story County Housing Trust Fund](#)**: The Story County Housing Trust (SCHT) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and is designated by the Iowa Finance Authority as the Local Housing Trust Fund for Story County. The goal of the SCHT is to improve affordable housing in Story

County. The Story County Housing Trust will consider applications for a variety of housing projects, but SCHAT will only consider projects and programs that improve housing affordability and benefit households below 80% area median income (AMI) with a focused interest on households below 30% AMI. Below are specific rules adopted for owner-occupied repair and rental assistance programs.

OWNER-OCCUPIED REPAIR PROGRAMS (OOR):

Funding Restrictions:

- The maximum per home reimbursement is \$15,000.00
- Five-year forgivable liens will be put on any property if the repairs are over \$5,000.00

Grant funds may be used for:

- To address critical life-safety issues – The repair should only address a critical need.
- To assist individuals in need – Assistance should be prioritized for homeowners in the most need.
- To fix a problem & improve living conditions – The repair should remedy a problem and improve living conditions.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS:

Funding Restrictions:

- The maximum per household reimbursement is \$2,000.00

Grant funds may be used for:

- Rent (current to keep tenants in housing or to move into housing.) Tenants must have a plan for ongoing rent.
- Utilities (to avoid shutoff or arrears to get tenant(s) into rental or turned back on). Deposits for rent and/or utilities. (Landlords would pay rent deposit back to grantee not the tenant).
- Application fees (a maximum of two applications per year per household and up to \$50 per application).

Grant funds may NOT be used for:

- Ongoing rent
- Student housing

- C. **United Way of Story County:** The majority of United Way of Story County funding is distributed through ASSET. However, Community Impact Grants of \$7,500 or less are to support unanticipated, emerging, or other distinct underfunded needs that further the mission of UWSC. Priority will be given to programs that reach underserved populations and/or are focused on UWSC's 2025 Community Impact Goals. Any nonprofit organization with a 501(c)3 designation serving Story County is eligible to apply.

APPENDIX A: STORY COUNTY HOUSING RESOURCES MATRIX

The information in the following table was provided as a service of the Story County Housing Trust. The goal is to keep this information current but unfortunately programs and services constantly change. If you find an error or would like to suggest a change, please communicate with the administrator of the Story County Housing Trust, Lucas Young at lyoung@mid-iowaplanning.org or 515.304.3579.

Audience	Service Area	Organization	Service Available	Qualifications	Contact Information	Address
<i>Unhoused, Renter, Homeowner, Other, Homebuyer</i>	<i>Any restrictions within Story County?</i>	<i>Name of entity and or program</i>	<i>What housing service or program is provided?</i>	<i>What are the restrictions? Income, age, status, occupancy, other? Any commitments?</i>	<i>Best way to get in touch or learn about the program/service</i>	<i>Alternate way reach provider</i>
Unhoused	Story County	YSS	Youth Shelter	Youth and adults under 25	515.233.3141 www.yss.org/program/	Rosedale Shelter, 703 Burnett Ave, Ames, IA 50010
Unhoused	Story County	The Bridge Home	Emergency Shelter and related support for the unhoused.	No restrictions beyond available funding and capacity.	515.232.8075 www.thebridgehome.org/our-work/	225 S Kellogg Ave, Ames, IA 50010
Unhoused	Story County	Cornerstone Church, Home for Awhile	90 day transitional housing. Limited to 3-4 apartments, one becoming available each month. Story County residents and those coming from other Iowa counties.	Household must include at least one child. Must be willing to meet the requirements and follow the rules of the program. Families who have been recently evicted or are nearing homelessness are eligible. Must already be living in Iowa.	Emily Hawk Home for Awhile Coordinator: ehawk@cornerstonelife.com cornerstonelife.com/hfa/	3425 Turing Street, Ames, IA 50010
Unhoused	Story County	Salvation Army	Temporary Shelter Hotel Voucher Program. Provides emergency hotel stays up to 30 days in a calendar year.	Show proof of unhoused status and proof of Story County residency. Limited to funding availability.	515.233.3567 centralusa.salvationarmy.org/ames/	Service Center 703 E Lincoln Way, Ames, IA
Unhoused	Story County	Salvation Army	Emergency Disaster Services (EDS) - includes temporary shelter (hotel stays), deposit/rent/pro-rated rent (if a tenant has to move as a result of a disaster), food, water, and some assistance with replacement items (bedding, towels, furniture, etc.) if the household wasn't covered by insurance or any other form of assistance (FEMA,	Referrals usually come from the Red Cross, but self-referrals are permitted as long as the event can be verified.	515.233.3567 centralusa.salvationarmy.org/ames/	Service Center 703 E Lincoln Way, Ames, IA

Audience	Service Area	Organization	Service Available etc.).	Qualifications	Contact Information	Address
Unhoused	Story County	ACCESS	Emergency shelter and rapid rehousing for survivors of abuse or violence.	Survivors	Housing/Sheltering Crisis Line: 515.292.0543 or 855.696.2980 www.assaultcarecenter.org/	1525 Airport Rd, Ames, IA 50014
Unhoused	Story County	Romero House	Day Shelter from 1-4pm and Sundays 10:30am-4pm, free lunch, shower, laundry and community space. Also connects unhoused with temporary shelter through private homes.	There are no restrictions for using the day shelter. Private homeowners use their discretion for housing.	515.337.8088 amesromerohouse.org	7096 Clark Ave, Ames, IA 50010
Renter	Story County	Aging Resources of Central Iowa	Rural Options Counselor can assist with applying for CIRHA, Rent Reimbursement, LIHEAP, and other assistance programs. The mission is to provide information and referrals for additional services or resources to help individuals age in place, safely, as long as possible.	Anyone aged 60+, adults 18-59 with a disability, an adult 18+ who is a caregiver for an adult 60+, non-parent relative aged 55+ raising children under age 18, or relative aged 55+ caregiving for an adult 18-59 with a disability.	Call 515.255.1310 and leave a message. The appropriate staff member will return your call. www.agingresources.com	Westport Center 4611 Mortensen Rd #114, Ames, IA
Renter	Story County	Aging Resources of Central Iowa	Assistance with deposit or 1st month's rent once a move-in date is set, utilities with a disconnect notice or already disconnected, rent when a late/3-day/eviction notice is received. Lists can also be accessed on our website, under Resources tab.	Anyone aged 60+, adults 18-59 with a disability, an adult 18+ who is a caregiver for an adult 60+, non-parent relative aged 55+ raising children under age 18, or relative aged 55+ caregiving for an adult 18-59 with a disability. Assistance limited to once every 2 years and is dependent on funding availability.	Call 515.255.1310 and leave a message. The appropriate staff member will return your call. www.agingresources.com	Westport Center 4611 Mortensen Rd #114, Ames, IA
Renter	Story	Aging	Story County Housing List	See list as each facility has	www.agingresources.com/resources/	Westport Center 4611

Audience	Service Area	Organization	Service Available	Qualifications	Contact Information	Address
	County	Resources of Central Iowa	– summary of senior living options in Story County. List includes independent living, assisted living, and memory care.	different restrictions.		Mortensen Rd #114, Ames, IA
Renter	Story County	Story County General Assistance	Rent and utility assistance	Assistance is available once every 6 months if applicant meets eligibility criteria	515.633.2930 www.storycountyia.gov/94/General-Assistance	126 S. Kellogg Ave #001, Ames, IA 50010
Renter	Story County	St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, Love Your Neighbor	Rent, deposit, and utility assistance. Only accepts phone calls on Thursday mornings at 9am. Limited to once every 12 months.	Must have a notice of application for assistance from Story County General Assistance and MICA (if helping with utilities)	515.292.3810 or email lyn@staparish.net	2210 Lincoln Way, Ames, IA 50010
Renter	Story County	YSS	Rent Assistance	Youth and adults under 25	515.233.3141 www.yss.org/program/	Headquarters: 420 Kellogg Ave, Ames, IA
Renter	Story County	The Salvation Army	Homelessness prevention in the form of deposit, rent, and utility assistance.	Must apply through Story County General Assistance and sign release of information. Available to Story County residents.	515.233.3567 centralusa.salvationarmy.org/ames/	Service Center 703 E Lincoln Way, Ames, IA
Renter	Story County	Good Neighbor Emergency Assistance	Rent and Utility assistance.	Must apply through Story County General Assistance and sign release of information. Must be a permanent Story County resident and must have a crisis or emergency situation. Limited to once in a 12 month period and funding availability.	515.296.1449 gnea.org/services/	613 Clark Ave, Ames, IA 50010
Renter	Ames and Gilbert	Christ Community Church Caring Fund	Rent or utility assistance. Walk-ins only from 1-3 pm on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month.	Limited to once in a 12 month period and funding availability. Not available to full-time ISU students.	515.232.2765	5501 George Washington Carver Ave, Ames, IA 50010
Renter	East of I-35 Only	St. Patrick's Catholic Church	Rent and utility assistance up to \$300	Limited to once in a 6 month period	515.382.2974	1110 11th Street, Nevada, IA 50201

Audience	Service Area	Organization	Service Available	Qualifications	Contact Information	Address
		Good Samaritan Fund				
Renter	Story County	Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA)	May be able to help with utilities in danger of disconnection, depending on available funds. LIHEAP applications begin October 1st for seniors or those with disabilities and Nov 1st for all families. Closes April 30th.	Income restricted. Need disconnection notice, copy of most recent bill, and proof of income for last 90 days.	641.956.3333 micaonline.org/services/families/liheap-energy-assistance-and-lihwap-water-assistance/	230 SE 16th Street, Ames, IA 50010
Renter	Story County	CIRHA-Central Iowa Regional Housing Authority	Section 8 Housing Vouchers and other Federal housing programs	Income Restrictions	515.986.1882 cirhahome.org	1201 SE Gateway Drive Grimes, IA 50111
Renter	Story County	Home Allies	Low barrier transitional housing units with rent assistance.	Income-based; includes educational component.	515.766.0538 homeallies.org	710 Kellogg Ave, Ames, IA
Homeowner	Story County, except Ames	USDA Rural Development	Single family housing repair grants to remove health and safety hazards	Over the age of 62, own and occupy the house, income restricted, and be unable to obtain affordable credit elsewhere	515.332.4411 www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-programs/single-family-housing-repair-loans-grants/ia	The Neal Smith Federal Building, 210 Walnut St # 873, Des Moines, IA 50309
Homeowner	Story County, except Ames	USDA Rural Development	Single family housing repair loans to repair, improve, or modernize homes. Can also be used to remove health and safety hazards.	Own and occupy the house, income restricted, and be unable to obtain affordable credit elsewhere	515.332.4411 www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-programs/single-family-housing-repair-loans-grants/ia	The Neal Smith Federal Building, 210 Walnut St # 873, Des Moines, IA 50309
Homeowner	Story County	The Salvation Army	Homelessness prevention in the form of mortgage and utility assistance	Income restricted and must provide proof of residency.	515.233.3567 centralusa.salvationarmy.org/ames/	Service Center 703 E Lincoln Way, Ames, IA
Homeowner	Story County	Story County Housing Trust	Does not provide direct assistance. Contact the SCHAT to find organizations that assist with owner-occupied repair projects.	Income Restricted	515.304.3579 storycountyyht.org	939 Office Park Rd, Suite 306, West Des Moines, IA 50265

Audience	Service Area	Organization	Service Available	Qualifications	Contact Information	Address
Homeowner	Story County	Story County Environmental Health	Low-interest loans for septic repair and replacement	Onsite Wastewater Assistance Program. Will need to work with Story County and a local lender.	515.382.7240 www.storycountyiowa.gov/1559/Financial-Assistance-For-Septic-Systems	900 6th Street, Nevada, IA 50201
Homeowner	Story County	Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA)	May be able to help with utilities in danger of disconnection, depending on available funds. May be able to help with furnace repairs and replacements. November 1 – April 15: Non-Emergency Energy Assistance (LIHEAP).	Income restricted. Need disconnection notice, copy of most recent bill, and proof of income for last 90 days.	641.956.3333 micaonline.org/services/families/liheap-energy-assistance-and-lihwap-water-assistance/	230 SE 16th Street, Ames, IA 50010
Homeowner	Story County	Able Up Iowa	Loans for home repairs or accessibility modifications.	Available to those with a disability, diagnosis, long-term condition, or over the age of 55.	https://ableupiowa.org/	130 S. Sheldon Ave, #201, Ames, IA 50014
Homeowner	Story County	Iowa Homeowner Assistance Fund	Mortgage or property tax support to eligible homeowners who are 30+ days behind.	Income restricted	888.668.0927 www.iowafinance.com/ihaf	1963 Bell Avenue, Suite 200 Des Moines, Iowa 50315
Veteran	Story County	Story County - Home Base Iowa	One-time grant up to \$3,000 for relocation assistance or related expenses.	Honorably discharged veterans relocating to and working full time in Story County.	www.storycountyiowa.gov/1191/Home-Base-Iowa	900 6th Street, Nevada, IA 50201
Veteran	Story County	Primary Health Care - SSVF	Supportive Services for Veterans and Families (SSVF) - Rental assistance and case management for veterans and families of veterans	Literal homeless veteran in Story County	Katie Nelson 515.248.1518	3510 Lincoln Way, Ames, IA 50014
Veteran	Story County	Veterans Affairs	Rent and utility assistance- can assist two times per calendar year, food and provisions, transportation, medical, dental and vision care assistance, prescription medication.	Veterans who reside in Story County	515.956.2626 Zachary Skelton: zskelton@storycountyiowa.org	126 S. Kellogg Ave #101, Ames, IA 50010

Audience	Service Area	Organization	Service Available	Qualifications	Contact Information	Address
Other	Story County	Nevada Food at First	Free Monday and Thursday evening meals. Delivery available to a variety of locations in Story County.	Open to all. For delivery call or text before 3:30 on day of.	515.215.3904 docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScu8KKuJKl2fbIRnUSLQvQuOpLyHK1a_4YNzfDIDxQjPLRqdg/viewform	1036 7th Steet, Nevada, IA 50201
Other	Story County	Food at First	Daily free meal from 5:45pm-6:15pm and Saturdays from 11:30am-12:15pm. It is also a perishable food pantry three times a week, Monday and Thursday: 4:30pm-5:30pm and Saturday from 10am-11am	Anyone who is struggling with hunger and food insecurity, no questions asked.	West Door at 611 Clark, Ames, IA foodatfirst.com/meal/	611 Clark Ave, Ames, IA 50010
Other	Story County	Martha's House of Hope	Emergency housing for unexpectedly pregnant women. Housing available until baby's first birthday.	18+ and pregnant, agree to rules & guidelines	515.337.0618 www.marthashouseofhope.org/about	PO Box 305, Ames, IA 50010
Other	Story County	Anchored Hope	Housing and wrap around support for women who have aged out of foster care.	Ages 18-24 and limit to 5 women at a time	anchoredhopehouse.org/	PO Box 21, Ames, IA 50010
Other	Story County	Matthew 25 House	Helps integrate men into a local church and the Ames community. Housing is provided along with meals. Asked to commit a year of their time to living in the home.	Outreach program for men who are in the Story County Jail, halfway houses or an Iowa Prison. No drugs, no alcohol, no in house smoking and no cars for the first six months. Employment will be maintained and meet regularly with resident director.	515.231.4385	330 S 2nd St, Ames, IA 50010
Other	Story County	Butterfly Freedom House	Residency at the Butterfly House for previously incarcerated women. Length of stay is a case by case. Women learn about different life skills.	For previously incarcerated women and must submit application and undergo an interview process. Can have children. Christian based and must participate in Bible	www.butterflyfreedomhouse.org/contact	PO Box 2382, Ames, IA 50010

Audience	Service Area	Organization	Service Available	Qualifications	Contact Information	Address
				Study during the week.		
Other	Story County	Eyerly Ball	Offers a full continuum of mental health services and treatment. Mental Health Medication Management, Mental Health Therapy, Family Therapy, Mobile Crisis, Assertive Community Treatment, Community Support Services, Integrated Health Home, Crisis Stabilization Community Based Services, First Episode Psychosis Program, Adult and Youth Outpatient.	Those who have Medicaid, Medicare, most commercial insurance plans and self-pay and they provide a sliding fee scale.	855.581.8111 www.unitypoint.org/locations/unitypoint-health---eyerly-ball#services	2521 S University Blvd, Unit 121, Ames, IA 50010
Other	Story County	Central Iowa Community Services (CICS)	Service coordinators are available to assist with applications for Medicaid, food assistance, housing, childcare assistance, social security. CICS serves those with unique needs like mental health, intellectual and other developmental disabilities.	Anyone with a disability or mental health need	www.cicsmhs.org/services/coordination-services/	1103 Buckeye Ave, Suite 104 Ames, Iowa 50010
Other	Story County	National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)	Supporting people with mental illnesses, their families and their friends. Wellness Center open during the week Monday Tuesday Thursday 10am-4pm. People can come to a support group or hang out in the wellness center. They also provide a NAMI helpline at 800.950.6264	Meet specific income and resource guidelines, reside in the CICS region, have had professional assessments completed that determine services are needed. NEED to call the CICS main phone number at 515.513.6870 to connect with CICS staff.	515.292.9400	424 5th Street, Ames, IA 50010
Other	Story	Community	Prevention and Education,	Accept Medicaid and most	515.232.6206 www.cfrhelps.org/programs-overview	1619 S High Ave, Ames, IA 50010

Audience	Service Area	Organization	Service Available	Qualifications	Contact Information	Address
	County	& Family Resources (CFR)	Detox, Outpatient Substance use and treatment services, Mental health services, recovery housing, residential substance use treatment services.	private insurance, as well as sliding-fee scale based on family income.		
Other	Ames	Ames Animal Shelter (Ames Police Department)	Pet food pantry; Boarding of pets for up to 7-days for those unhoused in the City of Ames.	Dependent on the current capacity of the shelter. Must transport pet to the shelter. An agreement will need to be signed surrendering the animal to the shelter after day 7.	Animal Shelter: 515.239.5530 Animal Control Officer: 515.231.1080 Ron Edwards: ron.edwards@cityofames.org	325 Billy Sunday Rd, Ames, IA 50010
Homebuyer	Story County, except Ames	USDA Rural Development	Rural Home Loans	Income Restricted, unable to secure a loan from other sources, meet and agree to Federal participation guidelines	515.284.4444 www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-programs/single-family-housing-direct-home-loans/ia	The Neal Smith Federal Building, 210 Walnut St # 873, Des Moines, IA 50309
Homebuyer	Story County	Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines	Home\$tart downpayment assistance program. Eligible households may receive \$15,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance.	Income restrictions and applicants must work with local bank that is a FHLB member.	www.fhlbdm.com/products-services/affordable-housing/homestart/	909 Locust St, Suite 500, Des Moines, IA 50309
Homebuyer	Story County	Iowa Finance Authority	Mortgage and down payment assistance programs, must work through an IFA approved lender	Income and purchase price restrictions.	opportunityiowa.gov/housing/homeownership-programs	1963 Bell Ave, Suite 200, Des Moines, IA 50315
Homebuyer	Story County	Story County Housing Trust	\$5,000 First-time Homebuyer grant	Income and debt restrictions, purchase price limit, lender participation, and fund availability.	515.304.3579 storycountyht.org/	939 Office Park Rd Suite 306, West Des Moines, IA 50265
Homebuyer	Story County	Habitat for Humanity of Central Iowa	Build and sell homes to qualified homebuyers with 0% mortgage	Application process with income requirements and rental history.	515.232.8815 hfhci.org/housing/	3504 Grand Ave, Ames, IA 50010
Homebuyer	Story County	Finally Home! (IFA)	Homebuyer education	\$50 online course.	www.finallyhome.org/en/partners/iowa/	n/a

Audience	Service Area	Organization (partner)	Service Available	Qualifications	Contact Information	Address
Homebuyer	Story County	HomeView	Homebuyer education	Free online course.	www.fanniemae.com/education	n/a
Homebuyer	Story County	CreditSmart Homebuyer U	Homebuyer education	Free online course.	creditsmart.freddie.mac.com/	n/a