






EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

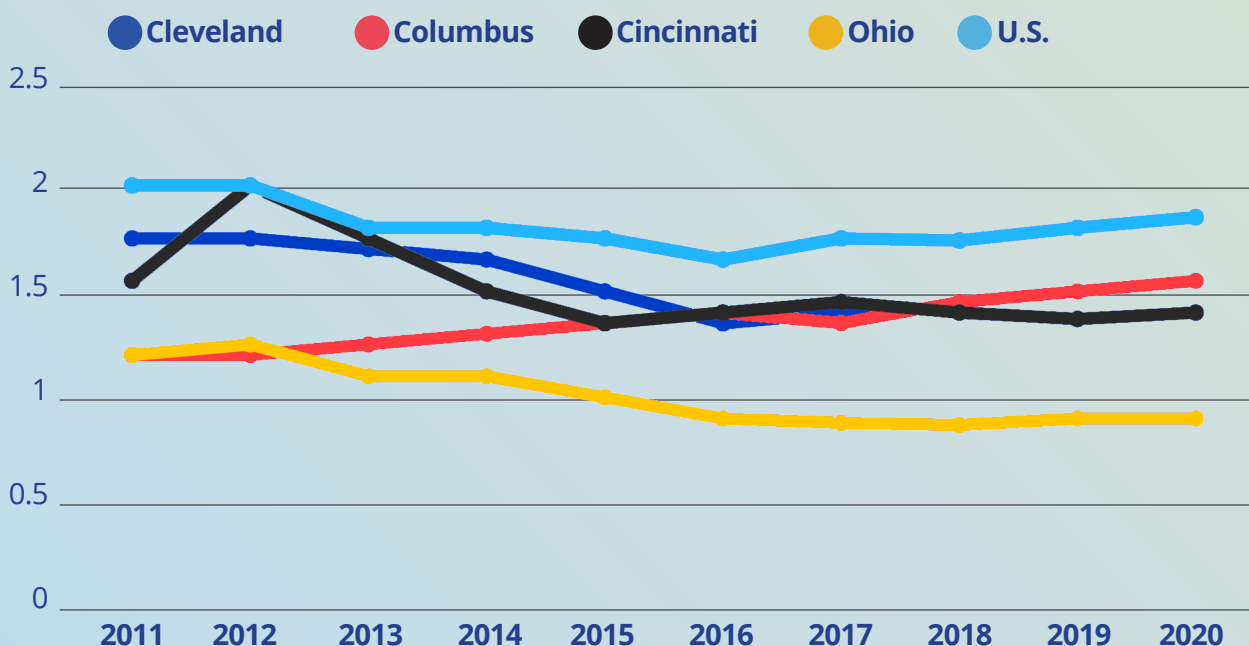
The Cuyahoga County Strategic Action Plan for Homelessness, (“Action Plan”) is the result of broad stakeholder input, a thorough review of service utilization data, analysis of resources and investments, and a centering of persons with lived experience of homelessness as the driver for our collective response. This Action Plan organizes system improvement strategies around five key system goals:

-  **1: Improve Engagement and Access**
-  **2: Improve Experience of Persons in Crisis Housing**
-  **3: Expand Housing Stabilization Capacity**
-  **4: Connect Clients to Income and Benefits**
-  **5: Build System Capacity**

Over the past ten years, the Cuyahoga Continuum of Care (CoC) has been largely successful in managing homelessness in the community. Despite significant external challenges – inflation, Coronavirus pandemic, and housing supply shortages, the CoC has kept homelessness from increasing and has been able to achieve small reductions in the number of people experiencing homelessness over the course of the year. However, when rates of homelessness in Cuyahoga are compared to the State of Ohio as a whole, the data reveal that Cleveland/Cuyahoga is not faring as well. The State of Ohio has experienced greater reductions in homelessness and a lower overall rate of homelessness compared to the Cleveland region. The fact that Cleveland has seen at best a very limited decrease in homelessness indicates that the local homeless response system requires modifications to achieve improved outcomes.

Homelessness Rate per 1,000 of General Population

Figure 1: Homelessness Rates Across Ohio Jurisdictions



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Analysis shows that homelessness disproportionately impacts certain populations including Blacks, the LGBTQ+ population, and people with disabilities. These groups tend to experience homelessness more often, remain homeless for longer periods of time, and have worse outcomes when they seek housing assistance.

Integrated throughout all strategies is a focus on equity of opportunity, inclusion of everyone, and affirming the broad diversity of our community. For too many years racism has been an ugly agent in repressing persons' rights and well-being. While the Cuyahoga County homelessness system may not be a primary contributor to historical inequities, we all have a collective responsibility in identifying overt and subconscious discrimination and continually working to rectify disparities. We know from research and community engagement efforts associated with development of the Action Plan that persons who identify as Black are not the only groups who experience injustice. Other populations such as LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities, women, youth, elderly, and the intersectionality of these and other groups require that Cuyahoga redouble efforts to provide equal access to all services and housing supports with targeted engagement, unique service designs, and culturally sensitive staff who can competently address the needs of all persons experiencing a housing crisis regardless of each person's differences.

...THIS ACTION PLAN OUTLINES MORE CLEARLY WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO ACTUALLY ACHIEVE A 25% REDUCTION IN HOMELESSNESS FOR CUYAHOGA COUNTY.

While past community-level planning to end homelessness has focused on doing the most we could with the limited resources available, this Action Plan outlines more clearly what it would take to actually achieve a 25% reduction in homelessness for Cuyahoga County. Managing homelessness is no longer sufficient because it leaves behind – remaining in homelessness – some of our most vulnerable citizens and those who have experienced the

greatest levels of discrimination. While we may not be able to assure that no one in Cleveland will experience a housing crisis in the future, this plan does point us toward a future in which **homelessness, when it does occur, will be rare, brief, and one-time.**

This Action Plan forecasts future rates of housing instability and proposes a range of actions, investments, and policies that will help us substantially reduce homelessness over the next five years, from 2023 through 2027. **This Action Plan establishes the ambitious goal of reducing homelessness by 25% by 2027.**

The Action Plan includes a strengthened prevention and diversion response so that people experiencing a housing crisis can obtain immediate assistance and avoid losing their housing. The Action Plan calls for immediate access to quality emergency shelter that is welcoming and appropriate for all people experiencing homelessness. We've also included a focus on helping people rapidly secure new housing and supportive services to assist people in maintaining housing.

