



# The Voice Indianapolis



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IN THIS ISSUE

## Welcome!

By: Us

Welcome to the Voice, a newsletter by the homeless voices of our community.

Welcome back to another issue of "The Voice." Like always, if you have missed any of our previous issues click the following link to our website and find them there ([www.creativechangeproject.com](http://www.creativechangeproject.com)). On the Home page of our website you will see a designated box for the newsletters, click, and you are there.

The purpose of this newsletter is to raise awareness and educate the general public on real homeless issues and the truth about living homeless.

Our hope is that we can persuade readers to facilitate or attend a Cultural Competency Presentation which will profoundly change the way you view homelessness.

We hope you enjoy our work!

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# IN THE NEWS!

## Long Lines, and Odds: Housing Lotteries for the Poor....

The New York Times

By: Mireya Navarro, Thursday, January 29, 2015

Sitting in the back pew of a packed church in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, William Jamieson hoped to learn winning tips from a workshop on how to play New York City's housing lotteries.

The lotteries, which the city uses to distribute subsidized apartments in new buildings, can be hard to navigate, and Mr. Jamieson had applications pending for lotteries in two buildings.

But surrounded by hundreds of other hopefuls at the church, he was not feeling particularly lucky.

"I probably have a better chance playing the Lotto," said Mr. Jamieson, 46, a warehouse worker who rents a room in a six-bedroom house and was hunting for a studio or a one-bedroom.

The odds of winning the New York Lotto jackpot are, of course, worse (one in 22 million on a \$1 play), but the housing lotteries have daunting odds of their own.

Last year, a new building in Greenpoint, Brooklyn drew 58,832 lottery applications for 105 affordable units. Not far



behind was the Sugar Hill development in Upper Manhattan, which drew more than 48,000 applicants for 98 apartments.

And topping both was the drawing this month for 38 units at 59 Frost Street in Williamsburg. With rents ranging from \$640 for a studio to \$1,395 for a two-bedroom, the Brooklyn property attracted more than 80,000 applications, said Martin Dunn, whose Dunn Development Corporation built the project. That is one unit for every 2,110 applications.

"It really shows how desperate the need is for affordable housing," Mr. Dunn said.

As the city tries to address a housing crisis, many New Yorkers are becoming all too familiar with the lotteries used to dole out apartments that poor and working-class residents can afford.

Even as such lotteries proliferate in pockets of the city where new

mixed-income developments are being built, the odds of going home to the prize are growing longer. That has led some elected officials and tenant advocates to call for changes in the process to account for the record-high demand.

"This is a moment when we really have to look at this because we're about to see probably the greatest use of the lottery system in city history," City Councilman Mark Levine said.

Last year, tenants won 2,500 new apartments through 41 lotteries that drew a total of 1.5 million applications, housing officials said. The lotteries are expected to multiply under Mayor Bill de Blasio's pledge to produce 80,000 moderately priced apartments over the next 10 years, a goal that, even if reached, would still leave many lottery hopefuls empty-handed.

"When you have so many applicants, every concern is magnified because there's so

much at stake,” said Mr. Levine, who said he was drafting a bill to create a task force to examine the lottery system.

The city’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development runs the lotteries. Applicants who secure the lowest numbers in the agency’s random drawings are screened by the developer, which verifies income and interviews candidates until enough eligible households are found to fill the units set aside as affordable.

Applications rose substantially in 2013 when the city began accepting them online. NYC Housing Connect, the website listing the open lotteries, currently shows more than 290,000 registered users.

Mr. Levine said the experience with the lottery for the Sugar Hill Development, in his Upper Manhattan district, was sobering and raised issues of fairness. Sugar Hill’s developer, the nonprofit organization Broadway Housing Communities, said about three-fourths of the applicants who had been screened were rejected, mostly because their earnings were too low (income requirements ranged from \$13,866 to \$79,700, depending on the apartment size) or they failed to provide the necessary paperwork. Some missed out by as little as \$25 a year, the developer said.

Other applicants had trouble producing tax records or proving their creditworthiness because their employment histories included numerous or short-lived low-paying jobs that are harder

to document. And in the months that it took to sort through the candidates, some applicants lost their eligibility because their earnings or family size had changed. (Tenants already moved in are not forced to leave if their circumstances change.)

“Hundreds of people were excluded for reasons that were not rational,” Ellen Baxter, the executive director of the Broadway Housing Communities, said of the city’s lottery rules.

Leigh Lumford, 28, said she applied to the lottery for an apartment in 60 Water Street, a new luxury building in Dumbo, Brooklyn, last March, without a glimmer of hope. But in September, she was notified that she had drawn No. 615 in the lottery. Though only 58 of the 290 apartments there are subsidized, so many people are found to be ineligible or withdraw that No. 615 qualified Ms. Lumford for screening.

“Oh, this is amazing,” she recalled thinking at the time.

But Ms. Lumford, who shares an apartment with two roommates in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, received a rejection letter in November saying she had surpassed the income requirement for an affordable unit by \$3,000 a year. She appealed the decision, and lost, arguing that the screeners miscalculated when reviewing pay stubs from her jobs, some of them paid by the hour, as a yoga teacher in an after-school program, a CPR instructor and a babysitter.

“We’re not typically people who have one job,” she said.

Some tenant advocates said the developers should relax their standards for creditworthiness and documentation to accommodate the realities of the low-income tenant pool. A bigger issue for some is that eligibility for the new units is restricted to narrow bands of income that often leave out the very poor who need housing the most or applicants like Mr. Jamieson, who earn about \$50,000 a year with overtime, too much money for a one-person household to qualify for many of the lotteries.

“It should be more equal,” Mr. Jamieson said. “They should decide case by case.”

Housing officials said the income restrictions were dictated by the subsidy programs financing the affordable units, which, in turn, depend on the strength of the housing market and the ability to finance new construction projects.

An equitable distribution of housing, city officials said, demands that everybody applying for lotteries be treated the same.

“It’s not fair if we have any flexibility in the rules,” said Elyzabeth Gaumer, an assistant housing commissioner. “It’s incredibly important that everybody has an equal chance of getting a unit or there’s more heartbreak to be had.”

But the administration recognizes some of the problems. Officials said they were tweaking the city's housing finance programs to broaden the range of incomes eligible for affordable apartments. And the lottery website, which is in English, will soon be available in six more languages and will include a guidebook with more detailed explanations about income calculations and other guidelines.

Increased efficiency would also help developers, who are required to fill the affordable units at the same rate or faster than the market-rate apartments but spend months disqualifying thousands of applicants. In addition to income, they also look for applicants with

preferential status — 5 percent of the affordable units are reserved for city employees and as many as half for residents already living in the community where the building will go up, which officials say helps preserve neighborhoods and entices municipal workers to stay in the city.

Developers said they had learned to start marketing the apartments early, sometimes years ahead.

"It's somewhat like finding a needle in a haystack," said Melissa R. Burch, executive vice president for development at Forest City Ratner Companies, which is preparing for the lottery of 2,250 affordable units at Pacific Park Brooklyn, formerly known as Atlantic Yards.

While many despair, some dreams come true. Oluwashina Alaka, 30, a restaurant chef and coffee distributor, recently moved from a studio into a \$737-a-month, one-bedroom apartment in the same Dumbo building Ms. Lumford covets.

Mr. Alaka agreed that the paperwork was daunting enough to make many people give up, but he advised persistence as the best way to improve one's chances.

"A lot of people eliminate themselves," he said. "To me, patience saved me 75 percent of my rent."

#### IN THE NEWS



## Special Thanks!

Customer service and community service are core commitments at Lowe's – and they have been for more than 60 years. Being a good neighbor means being committed to improving the places our employees and customers call home. We see that as an investment in our future. We've grown that investment as Lowe's has grown from a small-town hardware store in North Wilkesboro, N.C., to a FORTUNE® 100 home improvement company..

For more information follow the link below:

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## Did you know?

By: Travis Loller

### Did you know that homeless people need libraries, and libraries need them, too?

Jeffery Bailey spends nearly every day at his public library.

It's not just that he loves books. For Bailey, 43, who sleeps in a tent outside a church, the library is pretty much the only place he can go that won't charge him to provide safety, warmth, useful services and entertainment.

Many public libraries discourage homeless people from hanging around all day. "It could be the way you dress, the way your hair is," says Bailey, whose scruffy denim jacket could use a good wash.

But just as Bailey needs his library, the library needs him: In this digital age, many people who used to depend on libraries can find what they need online without leaving home. Menaced by budget cuts, many public libraries are effectively

failing to justify their relevance, reducing their hours year after year.

At the same time, libraries are more important than ever to people who can't otherwise get connected: Nearly two-thirds provide the only free computer and Internet access in their communities, according to the American Library Association.

In the 25 years since the ALA adopted a policy urging full access for poor and homeless library patrons, few have taken this mission as far as Nashville's main downtown library, where Bailey arrives early each day, standing on an icy sidewalk in below-freezing temperatures with a half-dozen other people until the ornate bronze doors open.

Once inside, he goes directly to the third floor, where rows of computer terminals are quickly occupied by people carrying bags filled with their worldly possessions.

#### HOMELESS FACTS

80%

Eighty percent (80%) of our homeless population suffer from mental health issues.

60%

Sixty percent (60%) of the homeless population have jobs.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION



The library recently renovated this section with their homeless patrons in mind, ditching countless shelves of bound copies of "Popular Mechanics" and other periodicals that are now available electronically, and making way for 68 computers and more tables with ethernet connections and power outlets.

"They have a good book selection, a good music selection, movies," Bailey said one morning after using Facebook to check in with his family. Without being able to stay at the library, "I'd probably do a lot of walking and trying to find a place to use the Internet."

More than 70 percent of librarians surveyed several years ago said they weren't aware of any libraries that successfully serve the poor, according to an ALA report.

"I think there are still a lot of punitive policies and a lot of barriers ... rules about the size of baggage you can bring in or policies about odor or no-sleeping policies," said librarian Julie Ann Winklestein, who co-wrote an ALA pamphlet to help librarians better serve people who have already been turned away by other institutions.

The single most important thing libraries can help people do online is find a job, the ALA found. Even fast food restaurants require online applications now. But many libraries still require patrons to have an address and photo identification to get a library card, and then limit the time patrons can spend online.

Librarian Liz Coleman, who serves on a new Homelessness Advisory Committee at the Nashville Public

Library, says her co-workers are frustrated they can't help everyone. One regular patron died of exposure; another was hit by a car and died shortly before he was to receive housing.

"It was a feeling of kind of helplessness," she said. "You see these folks every day, so you can't help but care about them. But what are you going to do? You can't take them home with you."

But librarians don't have to shoulder the burden alone: In a partnership with other agencies, the Nashville library hosts drop-in hours with city social workers and mental health counselors.

They helped Susan Hulme's sister-in-law, after she was hospitalized and couldn't work, to get food stamps and other resources for finding a new job. The woman was embarrassed, and intimidated by the bureaucracy of the social services agency. Going to her library made it easier.

"It was more friendly, more accessible," Hulme said. "It was a safe place for her to tell her story."

Other exceptions include Pima County, Ariz., where public health nurses wander the county's 27 libraries with stethoscopes around their necks, offering blood pressure checks and identifying difficult cases for more care.

In Weber County, Utah, public housing workers rely on librarians who know their homeless patrons by name to help them locate people approved for housing vouchers.

Librarians with The Queens Library in New York City work with the Department of Education to go into homeless shelters to hold library card drives, read stories to children, give away books and lead discussions with teenagers. The library also connects people to emergency food, shelter and legal services through a mobile phone application.

Pooling resources like this may seem obvious, but these agencies still don't work together in many communities. Winklestein says that needs to change, because providing information to the public is what libraries are supposed to be all about.

"Librarians can't solve people's problems, but we can provide them the resources to solve their own problems," she said.

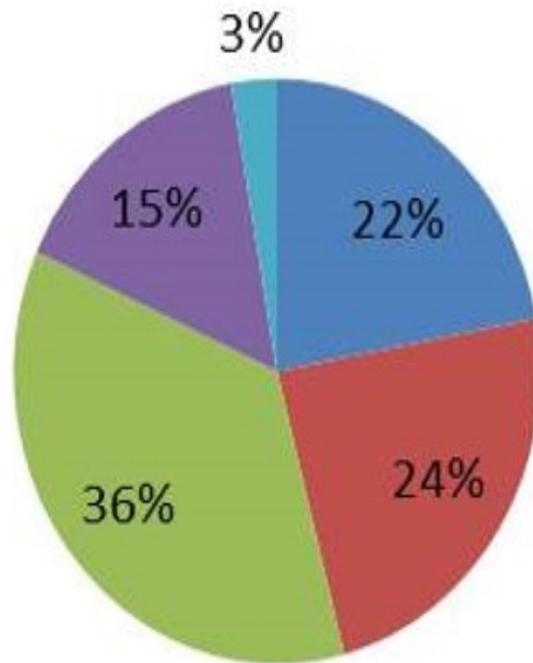


# CHARTING THE WAY:

Source: HUD

## Age Demographics of America's Homeless

■ Under 18   ■ 18 to 30   ■ 31-50   ■ 51-61   ■ 62 and older



# "Does Homelessness end with Housing?"

By: Sandi Vidal

## Is giving homeless people houses really the answer to the problem?

I was talking at the dinner table with some family members about my recent move to the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness. My brother-in-law piped up and said very simply, "You know what the solution to homelessness is? Put people in houses." This idea is being talked about nationally, has been profiled on 60 minutes and even semi-mocked on the Daily show with Jon Stewart. The question is, does it work? Is giving housing to the homeless the answer to homelessness?

The naysayers talk about the costs of putting someone in housing, others scoff and retort that they want free houses too. People get upset that their tax dollars go to support people who are lazy or who have made poor choices. On the other side of the fence are those who work directly with the homeless. They are showing through data and research that housing the homeless and most vulnerable actually saves money and reduces homelessness. Yes, I said saves money.

The Central Florida Commission on Homelessness performed a research study looking at the homeless who cost the most money to the taxpayers and systems in our area. The study

showed the most frequent flyers in the system cost over \$31,000 to taxpayers. This number was determined by looking at the number of days in jail and the hospitals.

I had the opportunity over the past two weeks to attend two forums on homelessness on the West coast. Once I adjusted to the time change (if waking up at 4:30 a.m. is an adjustment), I had the opportunity to learn from experts in the field who are currently doing permanent supportive housing (PSH) and rapid rehousing (RRH). While the systems are not perfect, they do show promise in helping to "end" homelessness. Ending homelessness is considered making it one time, brief, and rare.

Permanent Supportive Housing is generally reserved for those who are the most vulnerable including people who are chronically homeless who have physical or mental disabilities, and families with a high level of vulnerability such as single parent households where the parent has a disability. Most others fall in the category of Rapid Rehousing where the support can be low touch to higher touch depending on the family need. When possible diversion takes place to keep



people out of shelters and in safe housing. If a family can double up for a short period of time, this might be encouraged rather than going into shelter. For domestic violence survivors, safety is always a priority in determining the course of action.

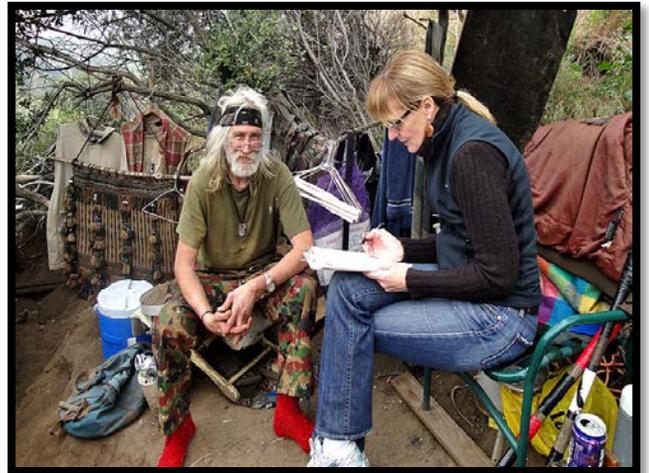
It is important to note there are not one size fits all solutions to homelessness. While assessments are done, it is not always easy to predict who will be successful with RRH. Areas with lower rent, good landlord relationships, and strong safety net support systems are seeing success.

For any program to work and be successful, it is crucial that the community supports it on all levels. The government officials need to make ending homelessness a priority rather than passing laws against the homeless, the providers have to work together and look at the big picture rather than being territorial which can be difficult when they may be competing for funding, and the business and philanthropy communities need

to bring financial support to the table including unrestricted flexible dollars.

So does giving houses to the homeless and helping families get back into housing work? The evidence suggests that it is by far the best and most cost effective

(for your tax dollars and mine) solution out there.



## Homeless Graphic Art



Check out our Facebook page to see more: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Creative-Change-Project/303593586466151>



how to help the  
**HOMELESS**



What do you really know about Homelessness?



**PRESENTATION**

2015 MARCH						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



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# The **HOMELESS** EXPERIENCE



**DATE:** Friday, April 24, 2015 - Sunday, April 26, 2015

**TIME:** Friday, 4pm Begin - Sunday, 2pm End

**LOCATION:** Downtown Indianapolis



Have you ever wondered what it's really like to be homeless and live out on the streets? Come see firsthand the situations that homeless individuals face daily by "Walking a Mile in my Shoes." This new program will allow you to:

1. Engage with the homeless of our community
2. Meet those who serve the homeless community
3. Acquire knowledge regarding the growing crisis of homelessness and
4. Become aware of the public's attitudes towards people who are homeless

Space is limited, so visit our website to sign up for this rare experience. A general itinerary is listed on our website for preview.  
<http://indy26aug.wix.com/indyhbr#!form/c6rr>



As we fight the criminalization of homelessness, we emphasize that our goal is not to promote the right to sleep on the streets; our goal is to ensure that if people are forced to call the streets home, that they be treated “fair and equal” in that capacity.

The  
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