To: Kansas Elected Officials

A Report from the Kansas Housing Advocacy Network (KHAN)

kansas housing advocacy network

Kansas: Take Action to Ensure Sustainable Economic Growth, Increase Housing Security, and End Homelessness

Executive Summary

Kansas faces a housing crisis with an estimated shortage of 100,000 housing units.[1] To ensure sustainable economic growth, Kansas needs an abundant housing supply with attainable homes for every Kansan. Meanwhile, homelessness has increased in Kansas in recent years but is low compared to other states and can be solved.[2] The Kansas Housing Advocacy Network (KHAN) is comprised of partners across Kansas addressing housing and homelessness, including nonprofits, local government, faith-based organizations, Kansans with lived experience, Habitat for Humanity, United Way of Kansas, Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition, and all continuums of care on homelessness (CoC).

KHAN recommends a multi-layered, research-based response to effectively address the complex causes of Kansas' housing shortage and homelessness. The 2021 Kansas Statewide Housing Needs Assessment identifies a severe shortage of attainable housing, or housing that is attainable by Kansans at different income levels, and a need to maintain and refurbish aging housing stock across the state. This shortage is especially acute for smaller units such as townhomes and multiplexes that provide starter housing and allow Kansas seniors to downsize, freeing up larger homes for growing families. State and local policies on land-use, zoning, building and fire codes create barriers and increase costs for new housing construction.

A shift in the rental market from smaller "mom and pop" owners to out-of-state corporate owners focused on maximizing profit has strained Kansas communities: higher rent, more evictions, and more code violations.[3] Changes in the federal budget has revealed an underinvestment in critical services that keep Kansas households in their homes. The 2026 United for ALICE report shows that 36% of employed Kansans are earning too little to live on, meaning working families are one mishap away from losing their housing. Meanwhile, Kansans on fixed incomes, such as Veterans and seniors, are unable to remain in their homes as costs increase.

In 2025, more than 5,000 Kansans became homeless for the first time in every part of the state. Homelessness is both caused by and exacerbated by the cost of housing and its availability. Factors like mental health, substance use, eviction history, and disability can increase the likelihood of someone becoming homeless and keep them homeless. Studies show that reacting to homelessness is expensive for communities, often much more expensive than proactively providing housing and supportive services to end homelessness. Costs are borne by private businesses, the health sector, local government, and taxpayers, so investment in addressing homelessness should be thoughtful and cost-effective.

Kansas can ensure sustainable economic growth, increase housing security, and end homelessness through a three-part response:

1. Develop and protect abundant housing;
2. Increase housing security, **and**
3. Support, stabilize and rehouse Kansans experiencing homelessness

This report outlines actionable policy recommendations and legislative changes that the Kansas legislature can undertake working with local governments and through private-public partnerships. For further information, please contact Christina Ashie Guidry, christinag@ucsjoco.org, or Molly Mendenhall, mmendenhall@kshomeless.com.

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[1] *See* 2025 GAP Report, National Low Income Housing Coalition, https://nlihc.org/gap/state/ks; *See also* 2021 Kansas Statewide Housing Needs Assessment, Kansas Housing Resource Corporation, which found that gap increasing *annually* by 3,800-4,800 units in rural areas alone, excluding need in the most populous five counties.

[2] Kansas has one of the lowest rates of homelessness per capita in the U.S., see *e.g.* https://www.citygatenetwork.org/homeless-rates-by-state/.

[3] *See* Fay Walker, et al, "Buying the Block: The Impact of Corporate Owners on Tenants, and How to Promote Community Accountability," LISC, June 2025, https://www.lisc.org/kansas-city/what-we-do/affordable-housing/buying-block/; *See also* "Investor Impact on Single Family Housing in the KC Region", Mid America Regional Council, Dec. 5, 2023, https://www.marc.org/news/economy/investor-impact-single-family-housing-kc-region.

Kansas Policy for Abundant Housing Supply, Housing Security, and Ending Homelessness

I. Develop and Protect Abundant Housing Where Kansans Need It

- **Reduce regulatory barriers and support *responsive* housing development across Kansas.** In 2026, SB 418 passed and was signed into law in Kansas. This was the first major effort at the state level to reduce regulatory barriers. KHAN members are working at a local level to assist with implementation of the requirements. Additionally, in the summer of 2026 the legislative post-audit produced an audit of the state fire marshal office and enforcement of state fire codes. Shortly after this, Gov. Kelly enacted an executive order convening a state taskforce to update the Kansas Fire Codes. Kansas should build on these efforts to reduce barriers by considering some of the following actions:
    - Implement any necessary clean ups to SB 418 that are found during implementation to continue to increase housing opportunities.
    - Examine additional by-right opportunities beyond single family homes like Montana allowing multifamily units by-right on any property with commercial zoning,
    - Expand Protest Petition reform like Texas did in 2025 to prevent a small minority of voices from over-riding the will of the majority by raising the threshold of adjacent property owners needed for a protest petition and changing the requirement from a 3/4 super-majority to a simple majority. Texas also allows multifamily housing in commercial zones by-right and prohibits cities from banning roommate arrangements.
    - Specifically around the fire code update Kansas should look at Montana, New Hampshire, and Texas that now allow single-stairwell apartments that reduce building costs without compromising safety and many states are eliminating parking minimums.
    - Encourage and support local governments in expediting housing development, such as the City of Overland Park pre-approving in-fill development or form-based zoning.
- **Create a dedicated revenue source for the State Housing Trust Fund.** Administered by KHRC, the fund incentivizes local communities to develop attainable workforce housing and rehabilitate existing housing, supports first-time homebuyers with down payment assistance and lowers homeowner and renter energy costs through weatherization. These are high impact strategies to retain existing housing so Kansans can safely age in place, especially in rural counties. Many Kansas counties have a rapidly aging housing stock with median housing age pre-1960s. Arizona, Nebraska and Missouri use recording, development and real estate tax fees to address housing needs.
- **Use public-private partnerships to invest, incentivize, and expedite building and maintaining homes to resolve our housing shortage.** Kansas has been underbuilding housing since before the 2007 recession. In 2025, the federal government expanded investment in the federal low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC), the primary driver for building of long-term affordable housing across the U.S. In 2022, the Kansas legislature joined other Midwest states and passed the Kansas Affordable Housing Tax Credit (KAHTC). In 2023, the first year of the full KAHTC, Kansas added 2,177 new units statewide, a >400% increase in LIHTC projects. But, in 2025, the Kansas legislature moved in the opposite direction of federal policy: terminating about 2/3 of the KAHTC and sunsetting it in 2028. Continuing to provide a complementary program to the federal LIHTC is critical especially with the 4% LIHTC component.

II. Increase Housing Security

- **Provide strategic rental assistance and tax sale relief to keep Kansans housed.** Since 2001, rents have increased an average of 19%, while wages have grown 4%.[4] Arizona uses a statewide housing trust fund to provide rental assistance to low-income seniors and families with children. Iowa and Nebraska use annual appropriations to subsidize rent for low-income individuals with disabilities, serious mental illness or substance use recovery.[5]
- **Leverage Kansas' new eviction expungement and mediation law to support housing stability.** Support rollout of the free, online eviction expungement process for qualifying Kansans. Set aside funding to support renters in paying past due eviction judgments to make landlords whole and allow renters that have demonstrated stability to earn a clean housing record to reduce barriers to housing.

[4] Bailey, Anna, *et al*., *Policymakers Can Solve Homelessness by Scaling Up Proven Solutions: Rental Assistance and Supportive Services*, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, June 12, 2024, https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/policymakers-can-solve-homelessness-by-scaling-up-proven-solutions-rental.
[5] *See* a range of U.S. rental assistance programs, *https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscpe/vol20num2/ch4.pdf*

- **Limit wealth extraction of Kansans by out-of-state corporations and private equity firms purchasing Kansas homes and using anticompetitive tools like pricing algorithms to dramatically increase rent.**[6] These practices consolidate home ownership, which forces local landlords out of the market and denies Kansas families the opportunity to own homes and build generational wealth. Without local landlords, the quality of rental housing declines and reduces community well-being.
- **Provide transparency in ownership and property condition for Kansans through a public, statewide rental registry, like the childcare registry.** The registry should identify ownership and affiliate information, local agent for service, and complaints and inspection results. Positive inspection reports allow good landlords to shine. Property owners use renter's applications to screen them; Kansas renters should know the owner and condition of the property they are renting.
- **Clarify that localities may perform periodic interior inspections to maintain housing quality.** Allow interior inspections with tenant consent *and* with reasonable notice after probable cause of a health and/or safety issue. The current statute, K.S.A. 12-16, 138, which only allows inspection with tenant consent has a significant gap: if a tenant leaves or is forced out while a code violation is in process, the city loses the ability to ensure compliance. As a result, cities have resorted to condemning entire complexes as unfit for habitation, effectively evicting all the tenants at once, as see in Timberlee (Topeka) and Aspen Place (Gardner).
- **Clarify that the Kansas Consumer Protection Act applies to the Residential Landlord Tenant Act to ensure safe, habitable housing.** Currently, there are no real tools to protect renters from landlords violating their own lease agreements. For example, Wichita has penalties for housing and building code violations, but often doesn't have the ability to incentivize compliance, allowing some landlords to continue bad practices.
- **Ensure fee transparency and caps on late fees and application and administrative fees.** Other states, such as Utah, Idaho, and Nevada ensure that renters have transparency. After filing suit against the largest property management company in the U.S. for deceiving renters about rent prices, the FTC is undertaking a rulemaking regulating the disclosure of fees in rental housing. Without reasonable limits, some renters face late fees much higher than their actual rent owed, such a Prairie Village resident who owed $21,000 in late fees but only $5,700 in rent.
- **Reduce the property tax burden for seniors and disabled individuals**. Rapidly increasing home values have created significant financial burden for households on a fixed income. Expanding the Homestead Act to include more households, including renters, and/or SAFESR – Kansas Property Tax Relief for Low Income Seniors will help these Kansans afford their homes.
- **Provide additional state support to KanCare so Kansans don't lose housing because of lack of healthcare access or medical debt.** About 10% of Kansans are in medical debt each year, a significant factor in losing housing. Reductions in federal support for KanCare puts rural hospitals, regional economic engines, at risk of closure and elimination of core services – like labor and delivery – which ensure Kansans have reliable access to health care wherever they live.
- **Support full employment and childcare supports as a pathway out of housing instability.** Lack of childcare and cost of childcare are primary reasons that Kansas caregivers are not in the workforce. Reduce unnecessary barriers for licensed family childcare providers while maintaining health and safety standards, helping expand childcare options where shortages are greatest.
    - Expand Child Day Care Assistance Tax Credit so it can be used by working parents.
    - Pass 2023 SB 164 to provide a $2,000 tax credit for qualified employees of licensed childcare centers.
    - Institute a state tax credit for children, like Utah and Minnesota.
- **Provide state support to ensure Kansans don't go hungry.** In many Kansas households, "rent eats first," meaning people will choose to pay for their housing over feeding themselves and their children. SNAP benefits help to ease this burden, providing dedicated funding to a family's grocery budget. Recent federal changes to SNAP have resulted in 24,000 Kansans losing their SNAP benefits. This means money will need to be pulled from other parts of a family's budget to keep food on the table, putting many households at risk of not being able to pay their rent and increasing the chance of eviction. A 2022 KU study found even small increases in WIC and SNAP provide family stabilization, improved health, and reduced use of Kansas' costly foster care system and emergency departments.

[6] *See* a series on the impact of mega-investors in the Kansas City region by Mid-America Regional Council, https://marc.org/news/economy-housing/housing-production-kansas-city-region-continues-lag-peer-metros.

III. Support, Stabilize, and Rehouse Kansans Experiencing Homelessness

- **Invest in effective programs that address underlying causes of homelessness through housing and supportive services to ensure housing stability and self-sufficiency in Kansas.** In 2025, the five Kansas CoCs responded to homelessness by housing 2,234 homeless Kansans through housing assistance *and* supportive services across the entire state of Kansas. CoC federal grants require a 25% local match to the 75% federal funding. Each CoC acts as the lead and coordinator of their local homelessness services system, bringing together stakeholders from law enforcement to service providers. Currently, all CoCs track and regularly report to HUD their progress on ending homelessness through the Homeless Management Information System. Along with KDADs, all 5 CoCs are participating in Built for Zero, a homeless response system improvement model. Together, they work to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring in Kansas. Built for Zero is built on quality, real-time data about homelessness and all 5 CoCs provide their data for a comprehensive data dashboard.
- **Support courts to establish eviction mediation programs**. 2026 legislation requires courts to consider mediation in residential rental evictions. These low-cost programs, like the 10th District (Johnson County), have a high impact, benefiting property owners, renters, law enforcement, and the court system.
- **Ensure adequate investment in medical, mental and behavioral health systems**. Rather than criminalizing homelessness, which is ineffective and extremely costly for law enforcement, court systems, local governments and tax payers, Kansas can invest in cost-saving permanent supportive housing projects like *500 in Five* in Kansas City, Missouri. UMKC analysis found after intervention that ongoing housing, case management, and medical costs were $44/day compared to pre-intervention costs of $153/day for intensive hospitalization, psychiatric inpatient services, and emergency responders for program participants.
    - Expand the available beds for mental health and substance use treatment;
    - Extend Medicaid benefits after 30 days of in-patient treatment;
    - Permit Medicaid to pay for CCBHCs and crisis centers to expand access to treatment through *constructing or rehabilitating housing* to stabilize individuals receiving care;
    - Fund pilot program funding through the Department of Corrections and KDADS pursuing the model program - *Returning Home Ohio* - developed by the Corporation for Supportive Housing in Ohio to provide permanent supportive housing to individual exiting state custody who have co-occurring disorders and would otherwise be released into homelessness; this program utilizes public-private partnerships and has resulted in significant cost-savings.
- **Ensure that Kansas and local jurisdictions are ready to maximize dollars available through the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act.**
- **Ensure all Kansans have access to housing stability and self-sufficiency programs through targeted investment in KDADS programing.** These suggestions were researched and presented by the Governor's Behavioral Services Planning Council's 2026 Housing and Homelessness Subcommittee.
    - Increase access to birth certificates by mirroring Missouri's pathway through local health departments instead of ordering online, by mail, or physically traveling to Topeka.
    - Preserve existing KDADS programming (PATH, Options, SHF, Boundary Spanners, Destination Home).
    - Increase access to Medicaid for those with SMI/SPMI to meet requirements of Statutory Services.
    - Align with the Peer Support subcommittee to support expanding peer respite programs to offer short-term, peer-led crisis support as an alternative to inpatient care.
    - Maintain a high-level of coordination between KDADS, CoCs, and KHRC to ensure that persons being served by those systems don't become homeless due to anticipated Federal budget cuts.