

NORTHEAST OHIO COALITION

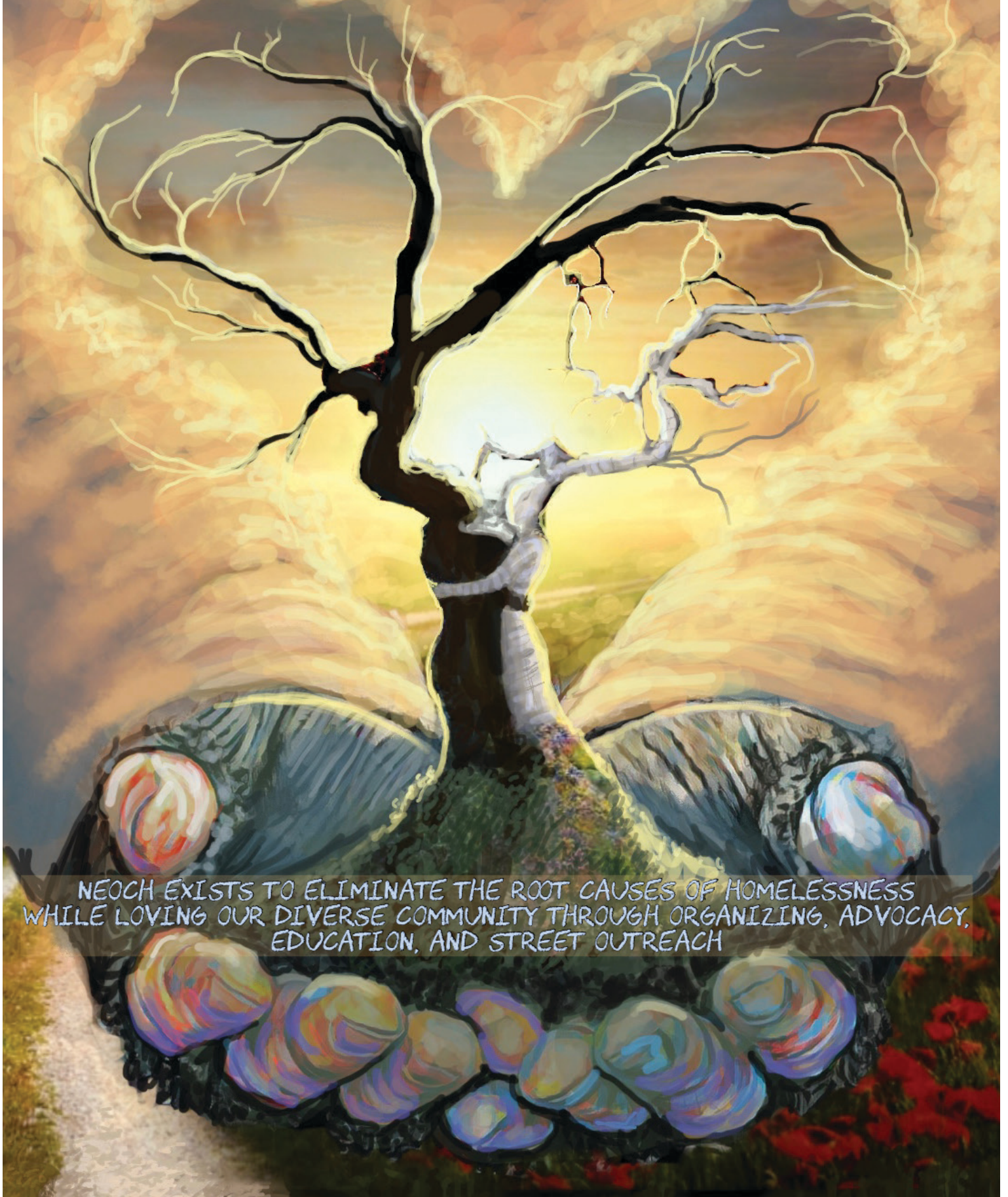
FOR THE HOMELESS



Strategic Plan

2021-2026

EVERYONE HAS A SAFE AND STABLE PLACE TO CALL HOME WHERE THEY CAN ALSO EMBRACE THEIR OWN POWER AND DIGNITY



NEOCH EXISTS TO ELIMINATE THE ROOT CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS WHILE LOVING OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITY THROUGH ORGANIZING, ADVOCACY, EDUCATION, AND STREET OUTREACH



The work of the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless is collective. Our Coalition is a community formed by unhoused people, concerned community members, social justice organizations, and homeless service providers. In 2020, we came together to seek input from the community to develop a bold and audacious plan that envisions a community where everyone has a safe and stable place to call home where they can also embrace their own power and dignity.

We came to strategic planning in unprecedented times – a pandemic, the election, state violence, uprisings, lockdowns, and the grind of daily life. Surely, taking on a strategic planning process would be extra. What we found was that the urgency of the moment invited us to reconsider what love asks us to dream for our community and envision new possibilities for our work. We are excited to share that plan with you.

If we ever stand a chance to end homelessness, redress our country's racist housing legacy, end the onslaught of racist violence and the horrific cycles of trauma that come with it, then we must come together and dismantle the systems that perpetuate it. For this reason, we are placing our anti-racism work front and center in our plan. We will do our own work and are committed to holding ourselves gracefully accountable – accountability is a gift – to people with lived experience and targeted communities. Furthermore, our plan calls us to do better when it comes to building race and equity into policies while at the same time seeking accountability for public officials, private businesses, and local nonprofits that uphold an unjust system. We know that another world is possible and collective liberation is needed to create it.

Throughout the strategic planning process, the community expressed the need for an organization that is developing a collective grassroots voice on issues of safe and affordable housing along with tenants' rights advocacy in Cleveland. Therefore, we are committed to being in solidarity with our family and friends experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, and we will advocate and organize alongside them. Hearing clearly from the community, we decided to increase our housing organizing work and over the next five years, and we will affirm the dignity and voice of people to grow and nurture a housing justice movement to address the desperate need for safe and affordable housing.

Our outreach work will continue to be a priority. We will continue our work of radical love by offering people experiencing unsheltered homelessness relational and compassionate street outreach services. We will layer resources and provide trauma-informed accompaniment into housing while fiercely defending their right to exist, rest, and utilize public spaces. Furthermore, we recognize the disproportionate impact of homelessness on gender nonconforming and genderqueer people, and we seek to build a specifically pro-LGBTQ coalition and outreach team.

We continue to say that structural racism and the lack of affordable housing are the leading causes of homelessness in our community. As NEOCH continues to be the homelessness educational hub that service providers, homeless advocates, and community members turn to for information and training, we also will continue to educate our community with an explicit anti-racist and class-conscious analysis while centering the voices of those directly impacted. Our critical pedagogy will place focus on implementing best practices to affirm clients' dignity and that seek to identify and eliminate the root causes of homelessness.

We must continue to respond to the urgency of this moment. The trauma of the pandemic cannot entice us into normalcy or complacency. Overflowing shelters linked to massive eviction dockets is not an option. Sanctioned state violence from police murder to mass incarcerations cannot be in our future. Continued housing insecurity and homelessness are no longer an option. The slow death of poverty cannot continue to grind our neighborhoods into desperation. There is no going back to normal.

Over the next five years, we will build a sustainable coalition with integrity. We recognize that our mission calls us to do more and ultimately to risk more. It believes that there is enough for everyone and that housing is a human right. Let us be radically inclusive, not for its own sake, but because we know that it is required of us to repair ourselves, our systems, and our community. We invite you to join us in supporting our courageous five-year strategic plan to eliminate the root causes of homelessness while loving our diverse community through organizing, advocacy, education, and street outreach. We can only do this work together.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In February 2020, the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH) gathered a group of board, staff, and community members to form a committee to guide the creation of its new five-year strategic plan. NEOCH's board of directors was committed to having a diverse group of voices guide and inform the planning effort, and this commitment was reflected in the planning committee, which included people with current and past lived experience of homelessness.

To further build on principle of a thoughtful and thorough process with a chorus of voices, the committee requested that the planning consultant, Strategy Design Partners (SDP), perform an environmental scan that would inform the committee's thinking and provide critical internal and external input and insights. SDP's scan included:

- Review of essential organizational documents
- External stakeholder interviews of partners, peers, funders, and policymakers
- A community-wide survey of NEOCH stakeholders that generated 216 responses
- A survey of those currently experiencing homelessness that generated 97 responses
- One-on-one interviews with NEOCH staff
- A board survey

The steering committee was regularly updated with the progress and themes from each element of the scan, and provided feedback, including a request to increase the reach of the survey of those currently homeless. This resulted in that survey reaching nearly 100, and generating key information to the committee.

Themes that emerged through the environmental scan were presented to the strategic planning committee in segments and also in an overarching synthesis. The committee used these materials to inform and add to its discussion about the future direction of NEOCH. Following the initial scan work, the committee then revisited the organization's mission, vision, and values statements. These core statements of purpose and principle were updated and then advanced to the full board of directors for further input, updates, and finalization.

With the new vision, mission, and values in place, the committee used these foundational statements and the scan materials to provide guidance as it developed the goals and strategies that make up the plan. As an organizing structure, the goals aligned behind the four pillars of the mission – Advocacy, Education, Organizing, & Street Outreach – along with an internal goal for Administration and Operations.

The plan, which was developed over a longer period of time to accommodate the challenges of COVID-19, was presented to full board for review and approval in January 2021.



STRATEGIC PLAN COMMITTEE:

1. Angelo Anderson
2. Ashley Close
3. Avidan Cover
4. Bishop Chui
5. Chris Knestrick

6. Kim Goodman
7. Loh
8. Molly Martin
9. Paula Miller

10. Sarah Gelsomino
11. Toni Johnson



VISION

Everyone has a safe and stable place to call home where they can also embrace their own power and dignity.

MISSION

NEOCH exists to eliminate the root causes of homelessness while loving our diverse community through organizing, advocacy, education, and street outreach.

VALUES

1. Anti-Racism
2. Community
3. Compassion
4. Affirming Dignity
5. Gracefully Accountable
6. Love
7. Pro-LGBTQ
8. Radically inclusive
9. Sustainability
10. Solidarity
11. Integrity
12. Trauma Informed
13. Justice



ADVOCACY

NEOCH's work to achieve systemic change leads service providers, government officials, and the Northeast Ohio community to address policies and conditions that cause homelessness while also changing their response to people experiencing a housing crisis.

Strategy 1

Undoing Racism: To create intentional spaces and accountability structures within our community's homelessness system to eliminate systemic racism that exists in the work to end homelessness

Strategy 2

Housing Rights & Policy: To increase stable housing rights for people at risk of homelessness while providing backbone support to create momentum for affordable housing policies that benefit low-income renters

Strategy 3

Civil & Human Rights: To protect and expand civil rights and work to decrease the criminalization of people experiencing homelessness

Strategy 4

Policy Influencer Relationships: To position NEOCH as the respected leader in homeless advocacy with government policymakers and philanthropic leaders by challenging them to engage deeply on homeless issues and adopt policies that reduce housing insecurity



EDUCATION

NEOCH's educational work in the community results in increased community awareness of the oppression and inequity in homelessness and housing systems and leads to those working and living in these contexts to organize and advocate for change.

Strategy 1

To position NEOCH as the homelessness educational hub that service providers, homeless advocates, and community members turn to for information and training on identifying and eliminating the root causes of homelessness

Strategy 2

To inform and equip frontline workers and homeless advocates with resources and evidence-based approaches to person-centered care so that people experiencing homelessness receive better quality services during the trauma of homelessness

Strategy 3

To serve as a catalyst for providing the community with homelessness and poverty data and up-to-date information on the services and resources available for people experiencing homelessness and poverty in Northeast Ohio



ORGANIZING

NEOCH's organizing work will mobilize a grassroots constituency to share ideas and build power to ignite public support, political will, and initiatives to eliminate the root causes of homelessness.

Strategy 1

To continue to nurture the Homeless Congress (east and west side) and support its efforts to build power, discuss areas of mutual concern, solve problems, and give homeless constituents direct access to community organizations and elected officials

Strategy 2

To grow and nurture the housing-justice movement in Cleveland to address the root causes of homelessness and housing insecurity, and to organize those working and living in homelessness and housing insecurity to advocate for change

Strategy 3

To provide community outreach, education, and leadership development support to build the capacity of tenants in Cleveland to preserve, stabilize, and improve their housing



OUTREACH

NEOCH reduces the total number of unsheltered homeless in the community through relationally based, trauma-informed street outreach services and collaboration with other service providers and volunteer groups.

Strategy 1

To improve the Cleveland Outreach Collaborative by refining the roles and responsibilities of each Collaborative partner to maximize impact and reduce the time each unsheltered person remains homeless

Strategy 2

To increase community recognition of NEOCH's role as the local leader and go-to agency for community members who encounter a person who is unsheltered and in need of compassionate care through their housing crisis

Strategy 3

To reduce the time unsheltered people spend navigating their crisis situations by continuing to reduce barriers to accessing services



ADMINISTRATION & OPERATIONS

NEOCH has the capacity, resources, facilities, and market presence necessary to support the achievement of its mission and programmatic work.

Strategy 1

To explore the feasibility and fundability of acquiring a new headquarters aligned with NEOCH's programmatic goals to serve as a welcoming, collaborative hub for organizing and outreach in Cleveland

Strategy 2

To cultivate and support a diverse, well-trained, highly motivated staff and board

Strategy 3

To continue expanding and diversifying organizational revenue

Strategy 4

To raise awareness of NEOCH's mission and impact with key audiences and the general public

**Northeast Ohio Coalition
for the Homeless**



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