

Over the course of a year, 80,000 Chicagoans experience homelessness. One in four of them is a child struggling to stay in school. Four out of five are African American or Latino. This number also includes people living “doubled-up” or staying temporarily with others because they lost their housing. If you become Mayor of Chicago, what would be your plan for addressing homelessness?



BILL DALEY

“We must do a better job of protecting Chicagoans from homelessness, especially our children who are the most vulnerable. The leading driver of homelessness is the gap between the cost of housing and household earnings. We must tackle the issue on both fronts. First, this means addressing housing affordability for our lowest-income families. The city must make it easier for developers to build affordable housing by helping them acquire land and secure the financing, tax credits and vouchers necessary to reach greater levels of affordability and keep units affordable for tenants. Second, it means growing the number of good jobs in Chicago and improving access to open positions through better job training, transportation and other supports. I’m committed to generating more good jobs through major investments in high-growth fields, such as advanced manufacturing.”



AMARA ENYIA

“Homelessness is a serious problem that embodies idea that in a wealthy city, no one should be too poor to survive. To combat homelessness, the Enyia mayoral administration will establish and train city residents in the management of housing cooperatives, so that renters are empowered to own, operate, and cultivate more affordable living spaces, and negotiate better terms for their stays. We will establish some rent control around large-scale development projects like the Obama Presidential Center, to ensure that residents are able to experience the benefits of new developments without being pushed out. We will implement “mixed housing” by not isolating public housing buildings from private residences, and will recruit engineers to redesign public housing units to improve the dignity of the space, and make them more family friendly. We must make sure that at least 30% of all future housing developments in the city agree to set aside affordable living spaces. We must prioritize developments in wards where affordable housing is underdeveloped and sparse, and remove the Affordable Requirements Ordinance’s provision that enables developers to “opt out” of setting aside affordable units, as long as they pay a fine. We must also scrutinize the pasts of all development agencies seeking to come into marginalized communities, so as to ensure that they both have and will maintain a high standard in building construction and maintenance. Unlike the past mayoral administration, we will not contract with developers known for their corrupt dealings at the local, state, federal, or international levels.”



LASHAWN FORD

“My Volunteer Health Adviser Dr. Thomas Huggett and his team have provided health care to those experiencing homelessness on the West Side for more than 20 years. I am running for mayor to work for racial healing between those who are homeless and our police on the West and South Sides. People need real jobs to support their families, and we will work to reverse the economic disinvestment on the West and South Sides. As a state representative for the last 12 years, I have passed laws that “Ban the Box”, seal certain records, and expunge other records to increase job opportunities. We will build trade schools leading to jobs with more than a living wage. I strongly support the \$15 minimum wage. Through the organizations like the West Side Heroin Task Force that I co-founded, we will continue to advocate for treatment and true supportive housing for those with substance use disorder and mental health issues, including trauma and/or domestic violence. Making Chicago the most insured city will increase access to medical and behavioral health services. We must strengthen emergency assistance to keep people in their homes before they become homeless, and we have to fight for affordable housing throughout Chicago.”



LORI LIGHTFOOT

“HUD’s Continuum of Care program provides homeless assistance funding to communities across the country. In most communities, the Continuum closely adheres to HUD’s criteria, thus the agency’s priorities have shaped communities across the country. HUD prioritizes funding for those who are defined as the most vulnerable -- individuals who have been homeless the longest, have the most unmet needs and who have the highest risk of death. This heightened threshold ensures the most extreme cases of chronic homelessness are addressed, but limits assistance, and leaves out a significant number who are also homeless or are living with housing instability. As a city, we must increase our efforts to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness and/or housing insecurity. My administration will allocate new funding created by a graduated real estate transfer tax to assist those who are at-risk of homelessness and people who are homeless but fall shy of HUD’s definition of chronic homelessness. Under the progressive real estate transfer tax, the first \$500,000 in property value would be taxed at the 0.35% rate and the incremental value beyond would be taxed according to the rate structure noted above. Under this structure, a transaction for a \$250,000 property would result in \$1,000 savings, while a transaction for a \$1 million property would result in approximately the same payment as under the current structure. Properties over \$5 million in value would see a further increased rate. The new funding will complement existing funding, allowing providers to meet the needs of individuals and families earlier. Flexible funding allows money to be spent on housing needs, and wraparound services like mental health services, family counseling and other resources to help address the root causes of issues that lead to homelessness. These and other services are vital to reducing homelessness. Access to short term rental subsidies, assistance with transportation costs, education or training are also tools that we must use to prevent displacement.”



SUSANA MENDOZA

“I am dedicated to ending the cycle of homelessness in Chicago. That is why I have pledged to support the real estate transfer tax increase which would generate at least \$150 million to build more affordable housing in Chicago and support programs to place homeless individuals in permanent housing. But I will not stop there. Besides building more affordable housing, we also need to address the problems that lead to homelessness in the first place. My plan to end homelessness includes expanding mental health services and job training services to ensure that the root causes of homelessness are addressed. I will also work to build partnerships and integration across the various city services as well as with community organizations like Covenant House Illinois that service the homeless population so that homeless individuals won’t have to navigate an alphabet soup of bureaucracy to get what they need to survive. I’ll also work on developing plans for targeted populations of homeless individuals, including homeless youth, homeless veterans, homeless families and homeless LGBTQ individuals. I’ll seek to tailor solutions to the unique needs of individual populations, because our strategy for addressing homelessness cannot be one-size-fits all.”



TONI PRECKWINKLE

“I am committed to providing affordable housing options to reduce the homeless population. I support a real-estate transfer tax on properties sold over \$1 million, which would reduce the homeless population by 10,000 in its first year. Furthermore, I have committed to many proposals to generate economic development and opportunity in the communities where it is most needed. I have committed to increasing the minimum wage to \$15/hour by 2021 and reforming the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund. As a part of my plan for the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund, more jobs and hiring opportunities will be provided to individuals who may be struggling after involvement in the criminal justice system, and 16-24 year olds who are out of work and school.”



WILLIE WILSON

“My plan includes utilizing vacant city buildings and properties to help house the homeless. There is not a rhyme nor reason we should be heating and maintaining empty buildings when human beings are sleeping on cement in the snow and rain. I regularly walk along Lower Wacker Drive and many other Chicago streets to help those less fortunate with cash to buy a meal or get a bed for the night. My heart has always been turned towards the homeless. This cause has always been a priority to me.”