



MEDIA RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Taylor Koopman, PIO

tpkoop@kalcountry.com

269-383-8651

Kalamazoo County, City of Kalamazoo, and City of Portage Collaborate to Provide Shelter for Families Experiencing Homelessness

KALAMAZOO, Mich. – Kalamazoo County Government, with the support of the cities of Kalamazoo and Portage, is taking a major step to address the growing need for family shelter space by acquiring a hotel to convert into a shelter for families experiencing homelessness. With over 60 units, the facility will help meet the critical shortage of emergency and residential shelter space for families with children.

The County plans to take ownership of the property by the end of the year at which point the site will remain closed to the public to undergo extensive renovations before it can function as a shelter. Currently operating as the Holiday Inn Express & Suites located at 3630 E. Cork St. in Kalamazoo, the shelter is expected to open in mid-2025 after necessary updates are completed to comply with health and safety standards. Before opening, the County will issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to select an organization to manage and operate the shelter.

“We saw a growing problem in our community, with families on waitlists and nowhere to turn, we knew we had to act quickly,” said **Kevin A. Catlin, Kalamazoo County Administrator/Controller**. “After many months of meaningful conversations with the [Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care](#) and [Southwest Michigan First](#), the Board of Commissioners embraced the opportunity to meet the immediate needs of these families and provide them with a safe, stable place to stay. While the shelter won’t open right away, this is a vital first step toward addressing homelessness and supporting those most in need.”

The need for shelter space has been growing, with nearly 1,300 school-age children in Kalamazoo County experiencing homelessness during the 2022-2023 school year. Additionally, the Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care reports that 68% of families in local homeless shelters have at least one child under the age of 18. This situation reflects national trends, as rising housing costs and a lack of affordable housing options continue to impact families across the country.

The situation has only worsened due to the recent changes to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program administered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), which stopped giving out new vouchers. As of July, all HCV waitlists are closed, leaving over 450 individuals and families waiting for help.

“This is one of many solutions needed to address homelessness in Kalamazoo County. Ultimately the goal is removing barriers and creating more permanent housing that is affordable to individuals and families at all income levels,” said **Patrese Griffin, Continuum of Care Director**. “In the meantime, more sheltering options are necessary. Unfortunately, there are a lot of families in this community who need immediate shelter, and the Housing Choice Voucher waitlist changes exacerbated an already dire situation. This is a collaborative approach to an issue that does not lie in one municipality or area.”

The acquisition of the hotel was made possible through financial commitments from the County, which provided \$3.5 million, and both the City of Kalamazoo, which contributed \$1.2 million in COVID-19 relief funding, and the City of Portage, which provided \$500,000 toward the project. The collective \$5.2 million in funding will go directly toward the purchase of the hotel, renovations, and operations.

“The City of Kalamazoo recognizes the growing issue of homelessness and emergency and residential shelter space for families with children,” said **David Anderson, City of Kalamazoo Mayor**. “We remain steadfast in supporting local organizations and initiatives aimed at affordable housing and assisting individuals and families without permanent housing. Since 2020 we’ve invested nearly \$29 million in affordable housing projects and programs. Our efforts are ongoing, and it’s great to have the County and the city of Portage leverage resources with us to address critical housing options to resolve this pressing issue.”

In addition to shelter, once operational, the facility will offer supportive services such as case management, employment support, and assistance with finding permanent affordable housing. These services will be vital for families who are navigating homelessness and need help transitioning to stable housing.

“Homelessness is a challenge that no family should face, and the City of Portage is committed to being part of the solution,” said **Patricia M. Randall, City of Portage Mayor**. “Through this partnership, we are working to ensure that families in our community have access to safe, temporary shelter and the support they need to find long-term housing stability.”

More information on the RFQ process and project timeline will be provided in the coming months.

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