



Executive Summary

Introduction

The Wake County Department of Housing Affordability and Community Revitalization (HACR) launched the Bridge to Home program as a comprehensive approach to address homelessness and affordable housing issues. This initiative builds on lessons learned from the nationally recognized and award-winning Hotels to Housing (H2H) program implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bridge to Home program leverages \$10.5 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to fill service gaps and achieve the comprehensive model. This mid-program analysis evaluates the impact and progress of the Bridge to Home model during the first two program years.

Background

Wake County continues to experience rapid population and economic growth, which lead to an affordable housing shortage and deficit of 65,860 units. Stagnant wages and increasing housing costs mean 81% of low-income renters experience housing cost burden (spending more than 30% of household income on housing costs). 45% of low-income renters in Wake spend more than half their income on housing. This financial strain significantly contributes to housing insecurity and homelessness, exacerbated by economic and systemic issues such as low housing vacancy and high median rental costs.

Bridge to Home Model

The Bridge to Home program aims to create a well-resourced, agile homeless response system rooted in Housing First, Low-Barrier, and Trauma-Informed principles. The program is structured around seven service pillars:



1. Flexible Financial Assistance: Provides various forms of direct financial assistance to reduce housing barriers.



2. Comprehensive Case Management: Ensures low client-to-case manager ratios for effective support.



3. Housing Navigation: Embeds navigators in agencies to assist clients in finding and securing housing.



4. Access to Benefits: Facilitates access to social security income and other benefits through specialized staff.



5. Healthcare Assistance: Integrates healthcare support within agencies to address clients' medical needs.



6. Transportation: Offers reliable, no-cost transportation for clients to access housing and employment.



7. Permanent Home Furnishings: Supplies essential furnishings to clients moving into permanent housing.