



PUBLIC STATEMENT

Emergency Housing Ordinance & POD Community Status

KALAMAZOO, Mich. [Oct. 24, 2023]—Following the Oct. 16, 2023, approval of the revised Emergency Housing Ordinance by the Kalamazoo City Commission, Housing Resources Inc. (HRI) has issued this public statement:

HRI applauds the compassionate leadership of Kalamazoo City Commissioners, Kalamazoo City staff and everyone involved in updating and extending the Emergency Housing Ordinance. The ordinance strengthens our community’s ability to respond quickly and adequately to help people who are unsheltered. We’re grateful to the City for working with us on behalf of those we serve.

The need is huge. With housing shortages at historic levels, more people are experiencing homelessness. As the lead agency in the Coordinated Entry System, HRI worked with 216 unsheltered individuals during the first half of 2023; more than half were women. Only 45 were in a program that got them into temporary shelter or housing; the rest were waiting for help.

With expertise in housing development, homelessness response and assistance, HRI bought, at our own expense, 50 ModPod units in 2021 to create a safe place to house people temporarily. Our plan is to form a POD Community, a “Place of Dignity” to help individuals develop a path to a sustainable life.

The POD Community will have single- and double-person units, separate showers and restrooms linked to City utilities, trash collection and pickup service, and 24/7 onsite staff and security to keep clients safe and help them develop pathways to stable housing. We’ve studied other communities where this has worked well, allowing us to develop best practices that will assure the safety and stability of residents within and beyond it.

Over the past two years, HRI evaluated many locations in Kalamazoo County where this POD Community could be placed; so far, none proved feasible. Now that the revised Emergency Housing Ordinance is in place and the requirements are clear, we’re optimistic that we can soon

identify and assess the best site. Then we will be able to announce the location and begin the application, communication and site development processes.

That path forward will require many weeks of work and review. Unfortunately, we're reaching the end of the construction season. This means, sadly, the POD units will not be assembled and running before winter. Still, we agree it's important that this be done in the right way for everyone involved, from strengthening the ordinance to assuring the right steps and supports are in place for our clients.

We invite the entire Kalamazoo community to join us in this effort. HRI has information about the POD Community, including Q&A, video and fact sheet, online at housingresourcesinc.org/a-kzoo-pod-community. No tax dollars have been involved in this project, and while some seed grants have helped us move forward, HRI needs financial support to make the POD Community a reality. Please donate at housingresourcesinc.org and click on DONATE NOW.

About HRI

Established in 1982 as a 501c(3) nonprofit organization, Housing Resources Inc. provides housing solutions for individuals and families during a housing crisis. Our mission is the assurance of housing for socially or economically vulnerable persons in Kalamazoo County. As the Housing Assistance Resource Agency (HARA) for Kalamazoo County, HRI provides a comprehensive menu of services designed to stabilize households experiencing homelessness and help those in jeopardy of losing their housing.

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