

The Housing and Homelessness Task Force held its second Listening Session with people experiencing homelessness on September 11, inviting guests visiting Traverse City's Jubilee House, the day shelter. Facilitated by Task Force Coordinator Christie Minervini and with assistance from Hannah Wescott, the session drew insights from 12 men aged 18 to 65. The discussion illuminated daily realities, systemic barriers, and urgent needs shaping their paths toward stability, highlighting housing scarcity, long wait lists, and a strong push for shelter, and more accessible outreach.

The participants described a fluid housing situation that underscores ongoing vulnerability. Since the Pines closed, the group has seen three men camping, two living in their vehicles, and seven in shelter. This division between rough outdoor living and formal shelter reflects a fragile balance between stability and precariousness, with options that remain inconsistent and insufficient to meet their needs.

Support networks emerged as both essential and strained. Community anchors like Central United Methodist and Jubilee House were valued for compassion and practical assistance, but participants collectively called for 24/7 shelter availability and expanded county resources. Street Outreach was repeatedly emphasized as more effective than waiting for individuals to seek services, with the Quick Response Team praised for proactive follow-up, connections to agencies, and ongoing support.

Transportation and broader systemic reforms were identified as critical levers. Improved transit, more frontline social workers, and housing capable of reuniting families were repeatedly prioritized, along with a safer, more consistent accountability framework within shelters. Participants highlighted harsh realities of the current system, including police harassment, the cycle of homelessness between shelters, parks, and jail, and barriers created by criminal records and fragmented mental health services. Calls for harm-reduction balance, sober-living options within shelters, and practical mobility tools—bus passes and bicycles—rounded out a comprehensive set of recommendations for a path toward stability.