

# This New Development Is a New Solution for Idaho Homelessness

**Idaho Housing and Finance Association**

Special Needs Housing: Combating Homelessness

## **HFA Staff Contact**

Dean Johnson

[deanj@ihfa.org](mailto:deanj@ihfa.org)

## **This New Development is a New Solution for Idaho Homelessness**

As communities across the country work to combat homelessness, many have adopted the Housing First approach. This philosophy recognizes that people need the safety and stability of a home before they can remedy the conditions that caused their homelessness. Based on the Point-In-Time Count and other data, it's estimated that up to half of those experiencing homelessness in Idaho live in Boise, the state's largest city.

Enter the New Path Community Housing development, an ambitious collaboration among city leaders, businesses, nonprofits and healthcare providers to address the acute need for additional units to house Idaho's most vulnerable. The result was the state's first single-site permanent supportive housing project to follow the Housing First model.

The development houses 40 people experiencing chronic homelessness and provides wrap-around services such as counseling and medical care that help residents achieve stability. The completion of New Path marks a strong start to Idaho Housing's permanent supportive housing development program. More importantly, the teamwork and creativity it took to complete the project has become a model for others.

### **Responding to a city need**

The idea to build a permanent supportive housing development in Boise started in 2014. Idaho Housing and Finance Association, along with its foundation, The Home Partnership Foundation, had begun to research Housing First programs in other communities.

In 2015, government, business, and nonprofit representatives, spurred by a burgeoning tent city in downtown Boise, held a series of meetings to discuss causes and possible solutions to the growing homeless population. The tent encampment was a visible reminder that there were holes in the city's current programs. In addition to public backlash, the tent city's eventual closure further reinforced the need for more permanent supportive housing in the city.

### **Strong partnerships pave the way**

Idaho does not have a funded housing trust fund, meaning financing for a Housing First development was going to take a community effort. The Home Partnership Foundation was the fiscal sponsor and the fundraising leader for a community-wide effort to build New Path.

On February 9, 2016, Idaho Housing and Finance Association and the city of Boise publicly announced plans to build Idaho's first single-site Housing First development as the first project in Idaho Housing's permanent supportive housing program. To pay for the project, Idaho Housing provided \$500,000 in HOME funds. Idaho Housing also awarded \$583,000 in Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, which generated \$5.83 million in development capital.

The city of Boise donated \$1 million. The Boise City/Ada County Housing Authorities, for the first time ever, dedicated 40 project-based vouchers to New Path to help residents pay rent and ensure stability of the project. Other partners included banks, developers, and nonprofits.

Although New Path had secured funding for construction, it still needed help to pay for the ongoing supportive services. Idaho, at the time, hadn't expanded Medicaid.

The two local hospitals, St. Luke's Health System and Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, each pledged \$100,000 and Ada County donated \$250,000 to help fund supportive services. Nonprofit providers Terry Reilly Health Services and CATCH were selected to provide the supportive services, which include case managers, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and healthcare.

After more than two years of collaboration and fundraising by 21 community partners, The New Path Community Housing Development officially opened its doors in November 2018.

### **'One of the best things to happen to me'**

The 2018 Point-in-Time count showed 182 chronically homeless people in Boise. New Path Community Housing immediately housed more than 40 of them and reduced the chronically homeless population by nearly 25 percent. The current residents are already experiencing improvements in physical health, medication management, access to healthy foods, and emotional well-being. This is a life-changing opportunity for New Path residents and reduces the negative effects and dangerous consequences that people living on the streets regularly experience.

"I love it. It's one of the best things to happen to me," said Edgar, a New Path resident. "I've been slapping myself upside the head here lately, wondering if I'm having a dream."

### **Evidence-based innovation**

Research by Boise State University found that the Boise community spent approximately \$50,000 on social services for each chronically homeless person during a six-month span in 2015. The study determined the community was spending \$5.3 million a year on social services for about 100 people experiencing chronic homelessness. Boise State researchers determined that by implementing a Housing First permanent supportive housing program it could save the community more than \$2.7 million annually.

### **A model for other communities**

Before the New Path Community Housing development was finished, other communities turned to Idaho to learn how its partnership worked.

Ted Madden, the chief operating officer for the Montana Healthcare Foundation, was part of a group of government and nonprofit leaders who came to Boise.

“What’s happening in Idaho, we can do in Montana,” Madden said. The Montana communities that are undertaking similar projects have used New Path as a model for the private-public partnerships necessary to accomplish similar projects in their own cities.

Others took notice, too.

In spring 2019, the Home Partnership Foundation and its partners were honored with the Secretary’s Award for Public-Philanthropic Partnerships from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Council on Foundations. The award recognizes innovative partnerships between foundations and government that have been critical in transforming communities and improving the quality of life for low- and moderate-income residents across the country.

### **A steppingstone to other developments**

The Home Partnership Foundation, Idaho Housing, the City of Boise, Boise City Ada/County Housing Authorities, and the Boise Veteran’s Administration, along with more than a dozen other partners and donors, are collaborating on a second project, called Valor Pointe, that will house at least 26 homeless Idaho veterans.

Valor Pointe residents will receive supportive services and case management from the Boise VA Medical Center. The city of Boise donated \$1.25 million. Idaho Housing awarded \$460,000 in Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (generating \$4.3 million in development capital). The Home Partnership Foundation raised \$236,000 in private donations dedicated to development costs to make the project financially viable. The group plans to break ground on Valor Pointe in summer 2019.

Idaho Housing has expanded its permanent supportive housing initiative into more rural and suburban parts of Idaho by establishing point incentives in the state’s LIHTC Qualified Allocation Plan to include from one to three PSH units in each new development built in Idaho.

## Visuals





**Media Coverage:**

<https://www.ktvb.com/article/news/local/new-type-of-community-housing-for-the-homeless-opens-in-boise/277-621797338>

<https://www.idahostatesman.com/latest-news/article222674705.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCEaugEJtF4>