

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICIES AND INITIATIVES IN

## TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA



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### Abstract

### Analysis

### Results

### Conclusion

### Methodology

#### Limitations

#### Recommendations

### References



#### Background Information

- Homelessness in Tallahassee and Leon County remains a persistent and escalating challenge affecting the community's most vulnerable populations.
- Contemporary research increasingly recognizes affordable housing initiatives as essential policy tools for addressing homelessness.
- Despite ongoing efforts, Leon County faces substantial barriers, including rising rental costs, a shortage of affordable housing units, and heightened demand for supportive services.
- Existing affordable housing initiatives have undergone limited evaluation, leaving questions about their effectiveness in improving housing stability and reducing homelessness.
- This study uses a mixed-method approach, combining descriptive data analysis with qualitative insights from first-person experiential accounts.
- Although analysis is ongoing, preliminary expectations suggest significant structural barriers that hinder residents' ability to access affordable housing in Tallahassee.
- Findings aim to offer evidence-based recommendations to policymakers, service providers, and community stakeholders to strengthen affordable housing strategies, refine program implementation, and reduce homelessness.

#### National Context

- Homelessness is a persistent national challenge in the United States, shaped by complex and interrelated factors.
- Rising housing costs and limited access to affordable housing are consistently identified as major contributors to increasing homelessness.
- The 2025 National Alliance on Homelessness Report documented an 18% increase in homelessness nationwide in 2024, with constrained housing accessibility as a primary driver.
- Affordable housing initiatives—such as Housing First and transitional housing models—are widely employed, though their effectiveness varies significantly across states and local jurisdictions.

- 1 Severe Housing Shortage**  
Florida and Leon County in particular face a major deficit in affordable housing units, leaving thousands of low-income households cost-burdened and directly contributing to rising homelessness in Tallahassee.
- 2 Local Investments Fall Short of Community Demand**  
Despite substantial county funding and various rental assistance programs, the rising demand for affordable housing overwhelms the scale of investment.
- 3 Significant Barriers Limit Access to Affordable Housing**  
Strict eligibility requirements, high deposit fees, long waitlists, and limited voucher utilization restrict many residents from being able to secure stable housing.
- 4 Program Effectiveness Undermined by Local Market Conditions**  
Evidence-backed interventions such as rapid rehousing and unconditional permanent housing (Housing First) are shown to improve overall stability; however, Tallahassee's limited housing supply and high rent costs interfere with successful implementation.
- 5 Location & Quality of Affordable Housing Affect Long-Term Stability**  
The concentration of units in low-resource neighborhoods limit access to transportation, employment, and services, reducing residents' ability to maintain stable housing.

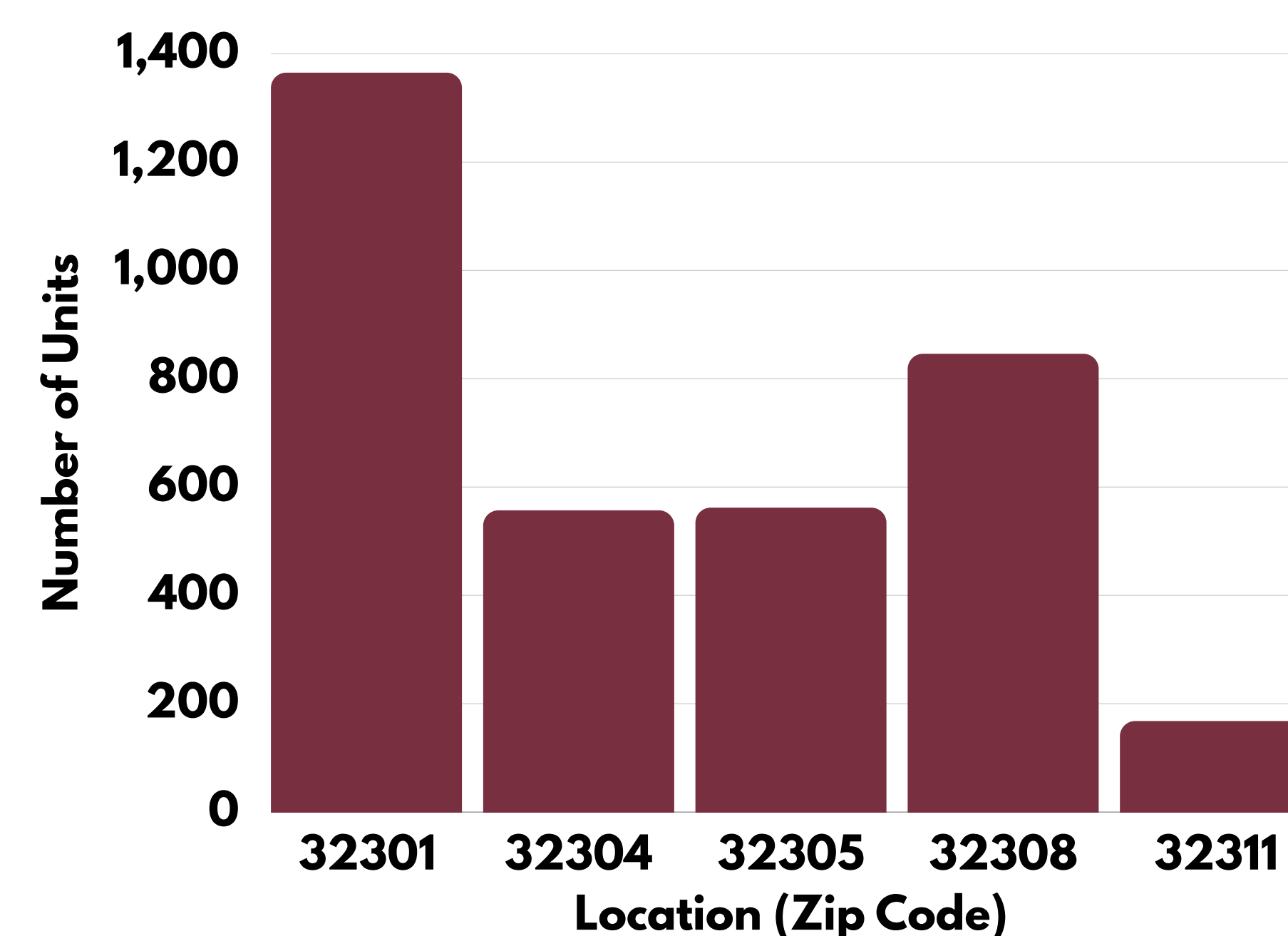
#### Research Question

- How effective are current affordable housing initiatives at preventing and reducing homelessness in Tallahassee, Leon County?

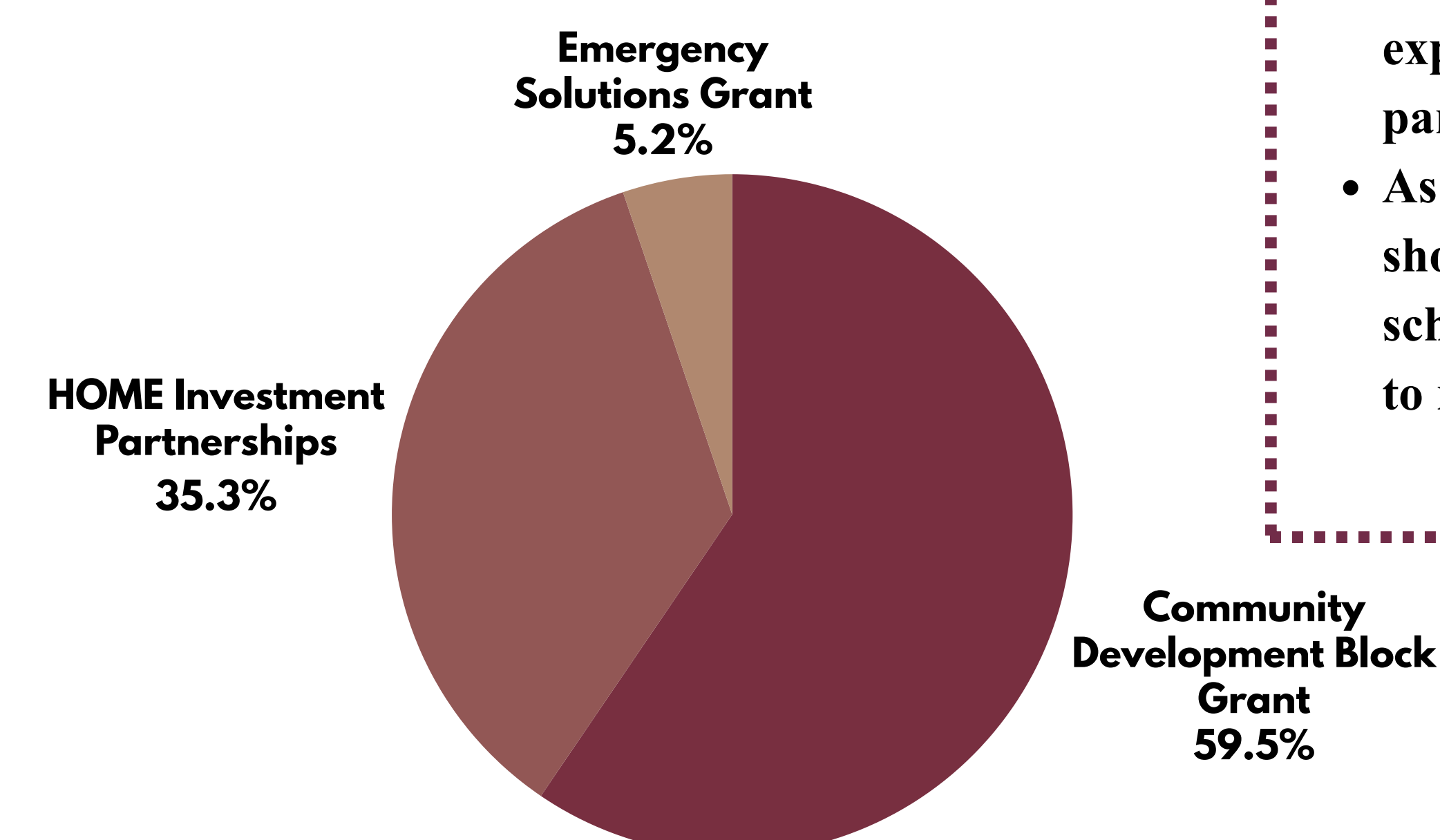
#### Analysis of Results

- A review of national research on low-income housing policies and homelessness indicators reveals consistent patterns: a nationwide shortage of affordable housing amid rising demand is strongly associated with increasing homelessness rates.
- The evaluation also highlights several promising strategies, including Housing First—which provides immediate, unconditional access to permanent housing—and Rapid Rehousing, which offers short-term rental assistance and supportive services. Recent studies show both models are effective at quickly returning individuals to stable housing and disrupting cycles of poverty.
- Tallahassee continues to experience persistently rising homelessness. Although the city has invested heavily in rental assistance, supportive services, and housing voucher programs, affordable housing initiatives in Leon County still face significant barriers in meeting the needs of low-income residents and effectively reducing homelessness.

**Affordable Housing Units for 2025 in Leon County**



**2025 Federal Allocation of Funds for Leon County**



#### Methodology

- Mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative data collection.
- Initial phase included a comprehensive overview of existing literature.

#### Quantitative Data

- Sources: Tallahassee City Housing Dept., Big Bend CoC, Kearney Center.
- Analyzed affordable housing distribution, rental assistance availability, local housing development policies.
- Findings focused on identifying key trends and patterns in affordable housing across Leon County and evaluating current policies and their corresponding gaps.

#### Qualitative Data

- Planned to conduct at least 50 interviews with individuals experiencing or having experienced homelessness in Tallahassee.
- Primary focus on exploring perceptions of stability, safety, and overall housing satisfaction.

#### Integrated Findings

- Combines institutional data with lived experiences.
- Provides a comprehensive evaluation of affordable housing and housing instability in Leon County.

- This project combines a literature review with institutional data and interviews from Tallahassee residents experiencing homelessness; however, due to budgetary constraints and the extensive scope of data collection, we were unable to gather substantial primary data during this phase.

- Cross-city comparisons with municipalities that share demographic and population characteristics with Tallahassee could help identify potential gaps in program implementation and position Leon County within the broader housing landscape of Florida and the United States. Such comparisons may also reveal practical and effective strategies for expanding affordable housing development, strengthening program participation, and improving long-term housing retention.
- As neighborhood-level services vary widely across the city, future research should also examine how employment opportunities, transportation access, school quality, and perceptions of overall safety influence residents' ability to maintain stable housing.