



Opening
New Doors
The Investment Campaign for Bridge Communities

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Campaign Update 4/7/26

We are now just \$281,000 away from our \$5 million goal for the ***Opening New Doors Campaign***.

To date, we have raised \$4,719,000 toward doubling the Bridge Communities endowment which is an extraordinary milestone that reflects your belief in Bridge families and in the future of our community. **Thank you.**

The real face of homelessness in DuPage County is most often a single mother with young children, a family set back by a cascade of misfortune: divorce, illness, low job wages, domestic abuse, job loss, a car breakdown, mounting debt. With no safety net, even one crisis can begin a spiral that is incredibly difficult to stop.

In DuPage County, one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, poverty is growing faster than in any other Illinois county. Today:

- One in five households earns less than \$35,000 per year
- 44% of renters are rent-burdened
- 3,000 children in DuPage County were identified as homeless by schools last year

These are our neighbors who are healthcare and childcare workers, laborers, service, and restaurant employees. Each person is essential to the fabric of our community, and all are being priced out of it.

Because of you, Bridge Communities is able to stand in that gap.

While national policy trends toward rapid rehousing models that prioritize short-term shelter, Bridge Communities remains committed to transitional housing that fosters long-term self-sufficiency. Our two-year-plus program provides families with stable housing, financial coaching, case management, trauma counseling, and dedicated volunteer mentors who walk alongside them week after week.

And it works.

- 91% of families graduate to permanent housing
- 86% never fall behind on rent again
- Families increase their average income by more than 24% during the program

Your generosity fuels innovative solutions like:

The Stability Program

In 2022, the Stability Program was launched to support families facing homelessness with more complex needs than our Transitional Housing Program (THP) is designed to support, allowing us to serve more families.

The families in crisis that are welcomed into Stability receive stable housing, dedicated case management, and comprehensive support with the goal of transitioning into THP or other permanent housing. Below is a snapshot of the progress families thus far have achieved through the Stability Program.

- 34 Stability families served since the program's inception, 18 in 2025 alone
- 85% of all Stability graduates transferred into our Transitional Housing Program
- The remaining 15% left for other stable housing opportunities
- 100% of 2025 Stability graduates progressed into Transitional Housing

Aesia Well, Stability Case Manager, shares that one of the greatest strengths of the program is its ability to house families more quickly than the Transitional Housing Program (THP). The Program intentionally prioritizes immediate needs first, establishing a foundation of safety and stability before families begin tackling longer-term goals.

Aesia shared that when Client M entered the Stability Program, it was clear that this was the right fit for her. Client M became homeless at one of the darkest points in her life. She was carrying deep grief after the death of her father, and then her brother was tragically killed in a car accident. In the midst of her own pain, she was also trying to ensure her children were supported, all while suffering from the added traumas of homelessness. Stability gave her the opportunity to begin healing. She was connected to a counselor and began actively engaging in therapy. Over time, she found employment and committed herself to improving her mental health. With the support and resources available to her, she was able to focus on her emotional wellbeing while building a stronger foundation for her family. Today, she has transitioned into the THP program, but she was able to do so from a much healthier place because she had the time and support to work through her grief and strengthen her mental health.

Every one of the 34 families housed and served through Stability would have been denied by our traditional Transitional Housing Program. And *every one* of the families has found the

resilience needed to stabilize their family and then work on their long-term housing, employment, family, and financial goals. Through the Stability Program, families are not only housed quickly, but they are also given the time, resources, and encouragement they need to rebuild their lives and move forward with confidence.

The Direct Mentor Model

Our Direct Mentor Model ensures every family is surrounded by consistent, caring support in partnership with volunteer mentors. Historically, Bridge's mentor teams come from Program Partner organizations (mainly faith communities). With many faith communities growing smaller and stretched for human and financial resources, Bridge has launched its Direct Mentor Model and is now our *own* Program Partner. Today, 12 families are served by 34 dedicated mentors under the leadership of Bridge Communities' Senior Manager of Program Partner Model and senior case manager Molly Howieson.

With the additional of community volunteer mentors, this Model is helping us keep pace with the growing number of families experiencing homelessness in the community. This Model removes a barrier to growth of our Transitional Housing Program and welcomes compassionate, caring community members as volunteer mentors – keeping us rooted in our mission of neighbor-helping-neighbor.

Our Housing Renovation Plan

Housing for client families is vital, but it's the quality of their new home that makes a truly pivotal difference - opening new doors to safety, pride, belonging, stability and confidence. Our commitment to providing beautiful homes that restore dignity and confidence the moment a family walks through the door is demonstrated by our ongoing capital improvements. We strive to be the best-looking apartment building on the block!

Maintaining our buildings at a level that honors, respects and empowers families is mission-critical, and a commitment that costs at least \$400,000 every year. Fundraising for much of these dollars is challenging and available funds are often not aligned with the needs.

By doubling our endowment through the ***Opening New Doors*** campaign, Bridge will be able to fund a substantial portion of our capital expenditures every year. And as a result, we will have more resources for client needs, innovative programming, and investing in our people.

The list is long on what we have completed in capital improvements in just the past year. We have replaced six roofs, installed state-of-the-art safety entryway door systems, replaced windows, asphalt parking lots, heating boilers and water heaters. Additionally, we have renovated four apartment units, refreshed another three, and updated common area staircases and laundry rooms. We have been busy – and it's all thanks to you!

Opening New Doors is about more than buildings or budgets. It is about a mother locking her apartment door for the first time and whispering, “We’re here. And we’re going to be okay.” It is about a child finally having a bedroom of their own. It is about mentors who become extended family. It is about stability that changes the trajectory of a life.

We are profoundly grateful for your partnership in this work. Your investment ensures that Bridge Communities will remain strong, innovative, and responsive for decades to come.

As we enter the final stretch of this campaign, we would be honored to expand this circle of support. If you know someone who may be interested in learning more about **Opening New Doors** and the lasting impact of endowment giving, please feel free to connect them with Kristin Short at Kristin.short@bridgecommunities.org or 630-403-5101.

Thank you again for helping us open doors. Not just for today, but for generations.

In Gratitude for You,

Amy Van Polen, CFRE
Chief Executive Officer
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