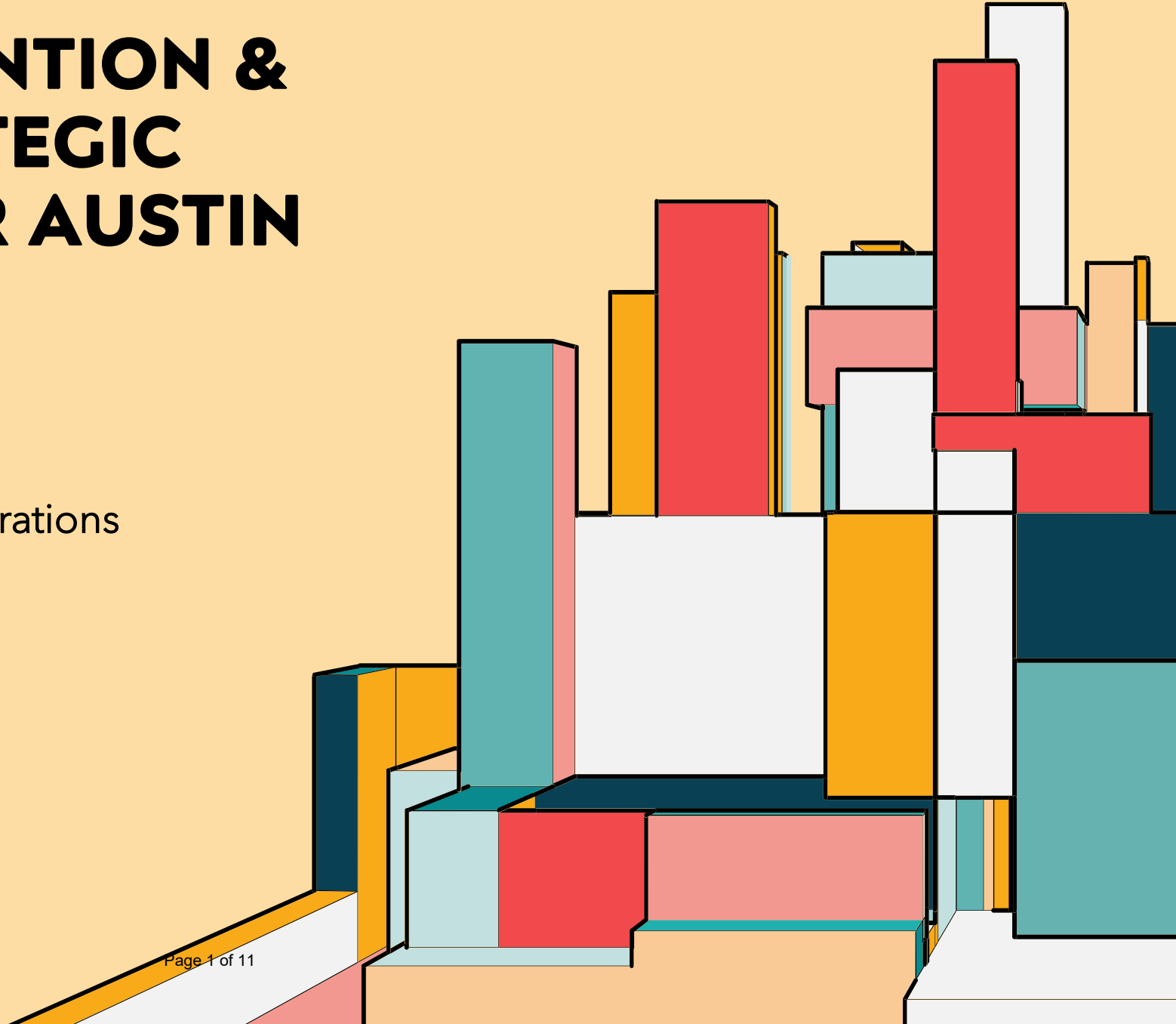


# HOMELESS PREVENTION & DIVERSION: STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS FOR AUSTIN

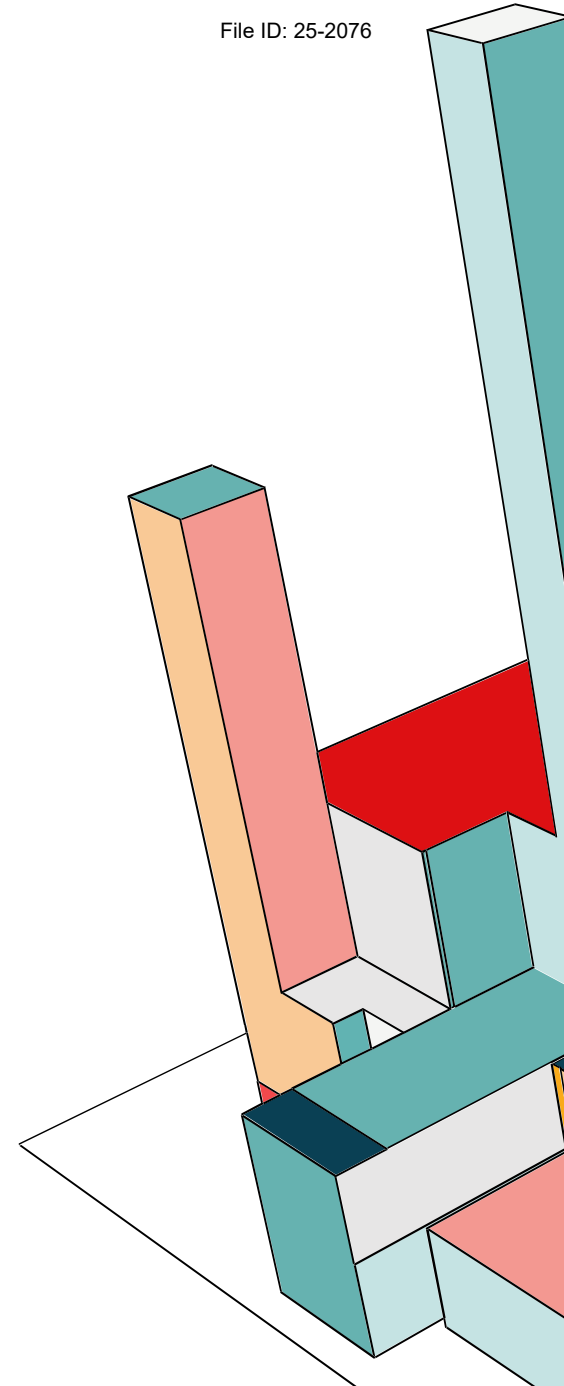
David Gray  
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Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations

Austin Public Health Committee  
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# AGENDA

- Define homeless prevention and diversion
- Highlight benefits of each strategy
- Explain why these programs are critical to Austin's homeless response system
- Program spotlights:
  - Wayfinder Program (Sunrise Navigation Center)
  - Landlord Engagement (Housing Connector)



# WHAT IS HOMELESS PREVENTION?

- Programs that provide support to households at imminent risk of homelessness so they can maintain their housing.
- Examples include emergency rental or utility assistance, landlord mediation, and case management to stabilize households.



# BENEFITS OF PREVENTION

- Reduces inflow into homelessness system
- Maintains community stability for families and individuals
- Cost-effective compared to shelter or rehousing
- Minimizes trauma associated with housing loss



# WHAT IS DIVERSION?

- Interventions that help people about to enter the system find safe alternatives to shelter.
- Examples include family/friend mediation, short-term financial assistance, and rapid problem-solving at entry points.

# BENEFITS OF DIVERSION

- Reduces demand for shelter and rehousing resources
- Provides quicker pathways to stability
- Strengthens natural support networks
- Allows system resources to focus on highest needs



# WHY WE ARE INVESTING IN PREVENTION & DIVERSION

Aligns with Austin's goal to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring

Reduces overall system cost and pressures – improving efficiency

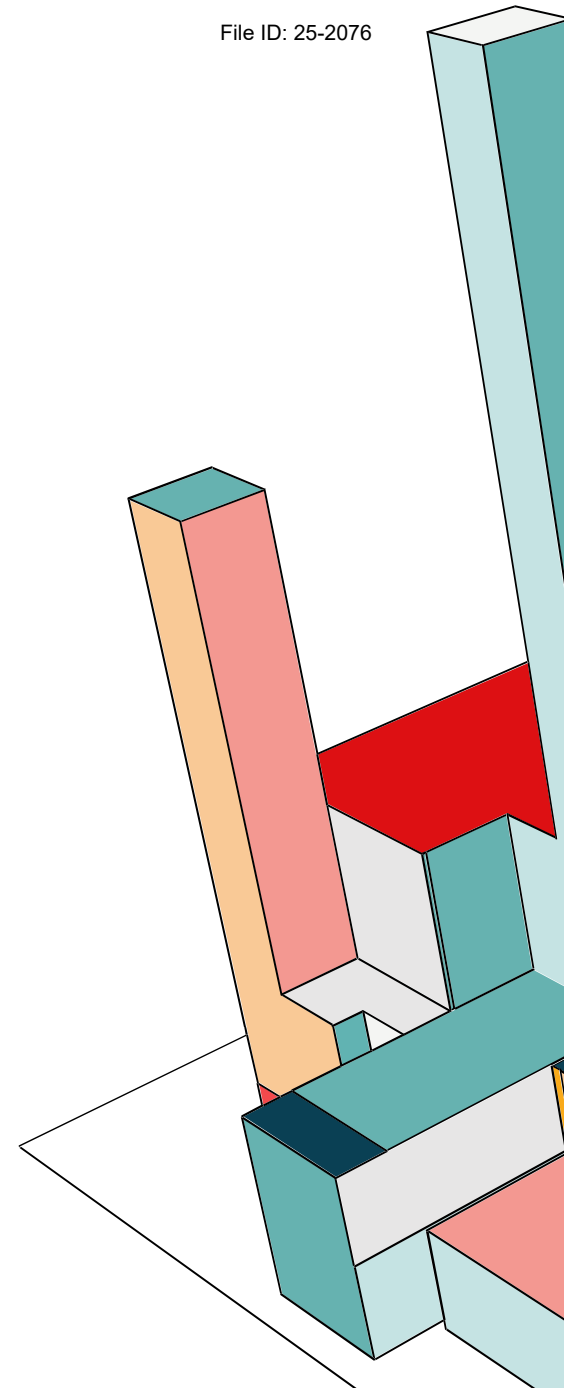
Supports households before crises deepen

Builds a balanced portfolio: prevention, diversion, shelter, and housing



# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: WAYFINDER PROGRAM

- Wayfinder focuses on 'ability to house' and disproportionately serves multi-person households (usually families with children).
- Sunrise's Wayfinder has become the #1 source of rehousing in Austin since its launch in 2024.
  - 959 individuals in FY25 alone; 1/3 housed with HSO funding.
  - The average household size at move-in is 2.1 people.
  - More than 440 children were rehoused by Wayfinder in the first 11 months of FY25, accounting for 90%+ of all child move-ins in our system.
- The average household move-in cost is around \$1700 one-time and the average cost per person for this program is less than \$800.
- 94% of clients remain housed and don't return to homelessness.



# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: HOUSING CONNECTOR

Total Residents

**40**



Properties

**40**



Community Partners

**13**



Avg. Household  
Size

**2**



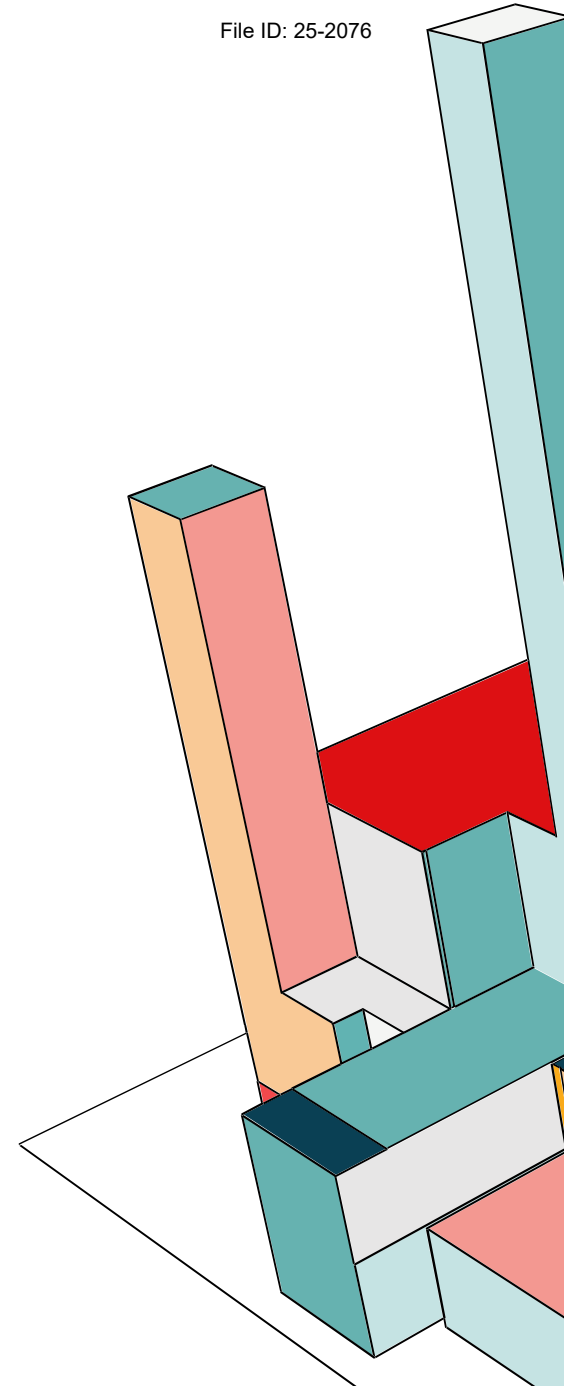
POC Households

**67%**



Median Time to Move-In

**15 Days**



## FINAL TAKEAWAYS

- Prevention keeps people stably housed and avoids costly crises.
- Diversion offers safe alternatives and reduces reliance on shelter.
- Both strategies are cost-effective and trauma-informed.
- They reduce system pressure, save taxpayer dollars, and allow more intensive resources to focus on the highest needs.
- Investing in prevention and diversion is essential to making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring in Austin.



# THANK YOU

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