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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It's Homeless Crisis Reporting Project week

DONTE KIRBY
Deputy Editor

The Homeless Crisis Reporting Project began as Street Sense bringing together outlets from across D.C. to report on homelessness for one day in 2016. Now, newsrooms across the District band together to report on homelessness for the week. This year's 2026 Homeless Crisis Reporting Project is underway, stretching from Oct. 5-11, culminating on World Homeless Day, a day of observance and action where we highlight stories working towards preventing, alleviating the suffering of, and ending homelessness. Read articles from our 12 partners organizations, local news outlets across the District, throughout the week at bit.ly/DCHCRP, and enjoy the news in this issue, which is Street Sense's contribution to the crisis project.



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ARTIST/VENDOR



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Oct. 12
ARTIST/VENDOR



Abel Putu
Oct. 12
ARTIST/VENDOR



Nikila Campbell
Oct. 14
ARTIST/VENDOR



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Oct. 19
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- The office will be closed Monday, Oct. 12, for Indigenous Peoples' Day.
- Street Sense audience survey is live! Earn five extra papers every time your customer fills out the survey.
- Two beloved workshops are back! Photography Workshop is every Monday at 11:30 a.m. And Theatre Workshop is every Wednesday at 12:00 p.m. Come see what's going on!
- Find a list of vendor announcements and other useful information just for you at streetsensemedia.org/vendor-info.

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NEWS



Abandoned items at one of the September encampment closures. Photo by Lucy Wong Ryniejski

Encampment updates: A contentious engagement to start September, and many sites were abandoned

LUCY WONG RYNIEJSKI, JAKE MITTLEMAN, CHIH-RONG KUO AND MADI KOESLER
Editorial Interns and Contributing Reporter

The District cleared 24 encampments in the month of September, bringing the total encampments cleared this year to over 140. While residents left many sites before the government arrived, one scheduled closure was particularly contentious.

On Sept. 1, by the time the closure outside the McPherson Square Metro station was scheduled to occur, about 38 people surrounded Daniel Kingery's human-powered vehicle. While Kingery lives in his structure on the corner of 15th and I Streets NW, he's covered the space with protest signs and sees his actions as a protest — not an encampment.

This mirrored the scene almost a year earlier, when five officers forcibly removed Kingery while he was still sitting in the structure. After being grabbed, Kingery fought back, causing him to fall where he was pinned to the concrete. Officers then let his feet drag along the sidewalk as they carried him to a police vehicle to be involuntarily hospitalized for a mental health evaluation. He was released later that day.

"It's about holding the government institutions accountable," Kingery said. "When you stop doing that, you become part of the problem."

This time, D.C. Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) officials on site made the call again to involuntarily hospitalize Kingery. But after heated conversations between Kingery and law enforcement about his First Amendment right to protest, the decision was reversed, and Kingery was allowed to stay.

"MPD made the decision that a better plan/coordinated effort with all of the agencies involved could be achieved at a later date," Sergeant Adam Bray wrote in an email later that day. "We always like to do everything we can to ensure that individuals like Daniel get the care they need without the situation escalating to a point where he might get injured or cause anybody else become injured."

At many of September's other closures, residents left before the city even arrived.

Because the D.C. Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DMHHS), which oversees clearings, warns residents before encampment removals, some leave early. They may want to have more time to pack their belongings, or avoid contact with government workers. Residents say that closures can be difficult and traumatic.

"My body is worn down from being out here," said one resident, who has moved several times in the last month. The resident declined to give their name.

In some cases, when residents leave, this can mean the closure is cancelled altogether. According to a DMHHS spokesperson, "the DMHHS Encampment Response Team does not conduct an encampment protocol engagement if the residents have relocated on their own." This month, the agency posted at least ten closures on its website that were later deleted.

In September, Street Sense also attended at least three closures where no residents were present, and no city officials appeared to arrive when the clearing was scheduled.

For instance, DMHHS scheduled an encampment clearing for an unauthorized shed behind an apartment complex in Ward 5 for Sept. 18. There were clothes, towels, a mattress, and empty frozen meal boxes scattered around the shed, but no residents or officials there that Street Sense could see. Two encampment closures near Logan Circle and U Street were originally scheduled for Sept. 22, though both were rescheduled for Sept. 25 due to weather. On Sept. 22, there was no one at either site, though one had a shopping cart with foam tiles and two foldable chairs.

Similarly, on Sept. 30, DMHHS officials entered a vacant property lot in Deanwood containing tires, wood panels, and an abandoned shed. No residents or property owners appeared on site. Officials showed up to clear the site, but then rescheduled to Oct. 15 due to equipment issues, according to the DMHHS spokesperson. According to DC Open Data, there are 2,888 registered vacant and blighted properties across the city.

At other closures, residents were there when officials arrived. On the morning of Sept. 17, James sat surrounded by what little of his possessions remained following the clearing of his encampment that occupied a section of Triangle Park in Southeast Washington.

"I don't even have a pair of shoes to put on," James said. "She threw my shoes and my medicine in the trash, my blood pressure machine, all that shit she said was trash."

James, who said he had been living in Triangle Park for upwards of a year, was referring to Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Andrea Davis, who was present at the clearing along with members of the DMHHS and DBH.

Davis, a commissioner representing the Anacostia and Fairlawn neighborhoods, said she's been coming out to see James since he arrived last year, and his arrival in the park brought "addicts and homeless individuals." She believes her neighborhood is entitled to a quality life like the rest of the city, but doesn't place the blame on the police, looking higher.

"It's the council's and the mayor's job to address these systematic issues that are happening in our community," Davis said. "This is not something that got like this overnight."

On Sept. 23, the morning after a heavy downpour, DMHHS removed an elderly woman from her makeshift tent in front of a lobbying firm across from the Hart Senate Office Building.

After living there for several months, the woman built a relationship with passersby on their way to work, people in the area said. Locals said they frequently offered her cups of coffee and greeted her on their way to the office. Yet many worried for her health as colder months approached.

The woman, who did not provide her name, said she felt "illegally evicted" from her temporary shelter. After moving for the past several years, she expressed frustration and fatigue at moving between locations.

DMHHS helped her pack the rest of her belongings – most soaked from rain – and offered to connect her with housing services. She said she did not need the majority of the belongings; she only wished she had kept the large tarp protecting her from the rain, though a nearby building tenant insisted on buying her another.

DMHHS currently has 13 closures scheduled for the month of October.

D.C. moves forward with shelter replacements and renovations, despite delays

LUCI GARZA
Editorial Intern

The District is behind on what some residents say are much-needed updates to its shelter system, but will open at least two new shelters by 2029, according to city officials.

D.C. operates about 1,130 year-round beds in low-barrier shelters, which homeless residents can walk up to the same day for a place to sleep, with hundreds more beds available in the winter and year-round at higher-barrier bridge housing sites. The District has been updating or replacing many of its shelter facilities, including opening a new 801 East Men's Shelter in 2022.

In 2024, the D.C. Department of Human Services, or DHS, which oversees shelters in the city, announced a plan to add 500 new shelter beds by the end of 2028. The plan included renovations at older shelters such as Patricia Handy and Blair, as well as opening two non-congregate shelters. But replacements for three sites — New York Avenue, Harriet Tubman, and Adam's Place — are running behind the original timeline.

According to a DHS spokesperson, since the plan's original announcement, the city has seen changes to its financial outlook and budget, including federal funding restrictions, delaying the timelines of some projects.

However, the spokesperson wrote, there is enough shelter capacity to meet demand across the city. On one night in January, over 700 people were sleeping outside, according to the Point-in-Time Count, well above the number of open beds at low-barrier shelters in the District.

One of the biggest anticipated changes is the closure of the New York Avenue Men's Shelter, which has 245 beds. Its replacement, a former animal shelter located at 1201 New York Ave. in Northeast D.C., was slated to open in 2028, but will now open in the summer of 2029, according to a statement from the Department of General Services, or DGS.

The shelter will expand its capacity to 335 beds to include specialty programs for senior care, as well as continue the facility's role as a hypothermia site from November to March.

In recent weeks, officials were concerned the opening could be delayed further. At a Sept. 15 Interagency Council on Homelessness meeting, a DHS official said the shelter was facing additional delays and financial constraints, pushing back its opening to 2030. According to one person at the meeting, the plans for the new building exceeded the proposed $55 million budget, due to expanded program requirements and rising construction costs.

But as of Oct. 1, city agencies say the shelter is on track to open in 2029, as they have since worked to complete necessary budget adjustments and design revisions. A DGS spokesperson said the agency has issued a request for proposals for construction, and a contractor is expected to be selected in November, with groundbreaking to begin before the end of this year.

The new shelter site is just three blocks away from where the men's shelter currently stands. The former building will remain open until the new site is ready for residents to move in, and then will be demolished. A similar strategy was used for the opening of 801 East Men's Shelter in January of 2022.

Several other shelters also have renovation or replacement plans for the next few years.

The Harriet Tubman Women's Shelter, at 1910 Massachusetts Ave. in Southeast D.C., was projected to close on April 1, 2026, but has remained open despite residents' continual complaints about poor conditions. According to a DHS spokesperson, the District is renovating a site to replace Harriet Tubman, set to open in winter 2027.

According to the spokesperson, delays for this project stemmed from challenges with the landlord securing financing for the renovations. Construction will begin this month, depending on permitting. The new building will be at 1009 11th St. in Northwest D.C.

Greencourt, a former gym located at 1339 Green Ct. in Northwest D.C., was also anticipated to open as a shelter this summer and add 100 low-barrier beds for men, but according to DHS, the project is no longer going forward. The agency said it is working to find a replacement site.

Greencourt's opening was expected to combat the planned 2028 closure of 150-bed Adam's Place, at 2210 Adams Pl. in Northeast D.C. Now, an additional 100 beds at the new New York Avenue shelter will make up that difference, according to the agency.

Two other shelter sites — La Casa, a permanent supportive housing site, and Blair, a single men's shelter — will also be temporarily closed starting next spring for construction, according to DHS.

Finally, the city is looking to open a third bridge housing site by 2028, to complement The Aston and E Street facilities, though some homeless advocates have asked the city to instead expand capacity at the Aston.



A new men's homeless shelter will be built on the site of the former animal shelter by 2029. Photo by Luci Garza

NEWS

Mayor's proposed housing affordability bill faces scrutiny at D.C. Council hearing

CHIH-RONG KUO
Editorial Intern

A proposed bill in D.C. aiming to preserve affordable housing could complicate eviction court processes and make it harder for extremely low-income households to find housing, according to local attorneys.

The D.C. Council's Committee on Housing met on Sep. 24 to discuss Mayor Muriel Bowser's proposed Housing Investment Protection Act, a follow-up to the Rebalancing Expectations for Neighbors, Tenants, and Landlords (RENTAL) Act, which passed in 2025. The over-five-hour meeting included testimony from small landlords, affordable housing providers, and nonprofits, who were split on the impact the bill's provisions could have.

The day before, the council also held a hearing on the Illegal Occupancy Enforcement Amendment Act, which Bowser introduced at the same time as the Housing Investment Protection Act. The bill would establish a law to prohibit people from remaining on a short-term rental property, like an Airbnb, beyond their rental term. Assistant Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department Nikki Lavenhouse testified the bill would clarify that the guest of the short-term rental is not a tenant or renter and can be removed from the property under trespassing laws.

The question of creating and preserving affordable housing in D.C. has plagued the mayor and council in recent years, as renters struggle to afford housing and unpaid rent mounts, threatening the city's affordable housing stock. While landlords and developers have generally called for the city to make it easier to file evictions and build housing, tenant advocates warn some measures could impact important resources for low-income renters.

Affordability changes

The bill proposes changes to Area Median Income, or AMI, eligibility that would expand access to housing support to more low-income Washingtonians, but could lead to a loss in deep affordability, according to some witnesses.

It would raise the eligibility for Local Rent Supplement Program, or LRSP, vouchers from households making less than 30% of the area's AMI to those making less than 50%, making "very low-income District residents" eligible for the program in addition to "extremely low-income District residents." (30% AMI in D.C. for a family of four is $49,850 a year, whereas 50% AMI is $83,050 a year, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.)

LRSP vouchers are a monthly rental subsidy paying a portion of a household's rent directly to the housing provider.

The proposed change is intended to address the vacancy rate of affordable units in D.C., according to Nina Albert, the deputy mayor for planning and economic development. D.C.'s affordable housing portfolio currently has a vacancy rate of 19%, compared to a typical vacancy rate of 5 to 8%, according to Albert. Albert believes the change will give housing developers the flexibility needed to match the supply of affordable units with tenant demand.

While the bill would expand eligibility, it could deprioritize low-income households, Charisse Lue, staff attorney at the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, said, furthering existing inequalities in the housing market.

"While affordable housing is needed for all low-income D.C. residents, 0 to 30% AMI households have suffered the most from the lack of affordable housing options," Lue said. "There is a dramatic difference in affordability and access for those within 0 to 30% AMI households and those within the 30 to 50% AMI."

The bill does not increase funding to the rent supplement program despite increasing who is eligible for it, leading to a dilution of already limited resources, Elena Bowers, a managing attorney in the Housing Law Unit at Legal Aid DC, said.

Eviction timelines

Another major point of contention was the bill's proposed eviction timeline. The bill would require an initial eviction hearing within 60 days after a landlord files a claim, shortened to 30 days if the tenant is suspected of engaging in dangerous crimes, including domestic violence. Currently, there is no required timeline for eviction hearings.

Most witnesses agreed the current eviction process is significantly delayed, creating uncertainty that impacts both landlords and tenants. Dean Hunter, the founder and CEO of the Small Multifamily Owners Association, said a survey of 600 housing providers found that 70% had an eviction case that took at least a year and 35% had cases that took more than two years. One real estate investor testified that out of the seven eviction cases he was managing, none were filed this year, and the oldest was filed in 2022.

However, some attorneys said just requiring a faster timeline was unlikely to actually improve the court process, and could deprioritize existing cases.

"Initial hearing timelines have already slowed down with the implementation of the RENTAL Act," Bowers said. "This additional change would in effect create a category of cases that are set for faster initial hearings than others. And the combination of prioritizing court resources for initial hearings would slow down and divert court resources from resolving cases on the merits."

Additionally, the proposed case timelines could increase displacement risks for tenants if they don't have time to explore all their options, said Mason Grow, a staff attorney for Rising for Justice, a D.C.-based legal aid network.

"Court efficiency is important, but it cannot come at the expense of due process," Grow said. "Our goal should be a system that resolves housing disputes fairly, preserves meaningful access to counsel, and prevents unnecessary evictions."

The bill would also change some requirements around when tenants can be evicted. Currently, landlords can remove tenants from rental units after a court determines someone living there committed a crime inside. Under the proposed bill, the landlord could seek an eviction if a resident has allegedly committed a crime inside, before they are convicted.

When Albert, the deputy mayor, was questioned about the new proposed timeline, she said that the goal was to set a standard and expectation, even if it could not be achieved 100% of the time.

But At-Large Councilmember Robert White, who convened the hearing as the head of the Housing Committee, said the judges he had spoken to said the 60-day deadline could not be met.

The D.C. Superior Court recently swore in eight new judges to address its vacancies, but lacks the budget to hire staffers. While new judges could help alleviate the eviction backlog, White cautioned the bill could create "false hope" about eviction timelines.

"If we put a timeline that the court can't meet, that doesn't solve the problem that you've articulated and that others have articulated of predictability," White said. "I'm not saying I oppose putting a timeline in. I'm saying I oppose putting a timeline in if I know they can't meet it."

Landlord access to units

The proposed bill would also increase a landlord access to their tenants' units. The current law says tenants can't unreasonably prevent their housing provider from entering their unit if they receive a proper request beforehand. The proposed bill gives housing providers the right to enter the rental unit for any reasonable purpose as long as they have provided reasonable notice to the tenant, and stipulates the housing provider shall have a key or other means of access to the rental unit at all times.

Several landlords and affordable housing providers testified the provision would allow landlords to make necessary repairs quickly.

"When access is delayed or repeated violations have occurred, repairs, for instance, that should take days can now take weeks or months," Karissa Spann, the president of the DC chapter of the National Association of Residential Property Managers, said. "That can increase cost. It could worsen the property condition and ultimately affect the tenant, the owner, and the neighboring residents."

But tenant attorneys said the provision gives too much power to landlords, who already have multiple ways to access a unit. The proposed bill would allow the court to "assess appropriate damages" against a tenant who refused entry to their landlord, meaning they may have to pay the landlord a fine.

"The remedies that this act proposes to add, specifically ones that are beyond just injunctive relief to allow access, could cause undue harm to tenants considering how fact-specific and complicated sometimes those access questions are," Makenna Osborn, senior policy attorney at Children's Law Center, said.

Next steps

Following the hearing, the Housing Investment Protection Act will undergo revisions before a final D.C. Council vote, though a date has not yet been set.

Immediately following the hearing, White released a statement supporting most of the provisions in the bill, but raising concerns again about the eviction timeline.

"I support the goal of predictable hearing timelines, but a deadline on paper does not create a judge or resolve a case," White wrote. "I support changes that will produce timely, fair decisions for responsible housing providers and tenants. But when policy treats every tenant like a scammer or every landlord like a slumlord, it usually hurts the people in the middle."

Witnesses at the hearing voiced a similar sentiment, highlighting the goal of collaboration between landlords and tenants to preserve affordable housing.

"We do not have to choose between protecting tenants and maintaining a healthy rental housing market," Spann said. "Good housing policy can do both."

With a mayoral transition ahead, D.C. weighs the future of the Interagency Council on Homelessness

LUCY MONTALTI
Editorial Intern

D.C.'s Interagency Council on Homelessness, or ICH, has been responsible for coordinating the District's efforts to respond to and end homelessness since its inception in 2005. But over the past two decades, the task has proven easier said than done.

The 2005 Homeless Services Reform Act, or HSRA, established the ICH and gave it several responsibilities, including drafting strategic plans to end homelessness in the District, creating an annual winter plan, and governing D.C.'s network of housing and homelessness services. However, the ICH has struggled to meet these obligations, a 2024 D.C. Inspector General report found. More recently, the ICH only drafted its new strategic plan to end homelessness nearly a year after the last one expired.

On Sept. 30, Ward 3 Councilmember Matt Frumin, chair of the D.C. Council Committee on Human Services, held a roundtable discussion on the future of the ICH, looking ahead to D.C.'s upcoming mayoral transition. Over a nearly four-hour meeting, ICH staff members, homelessness service providers, and District officials testified, describing a body that is understaffed, overworked, and uncertain about where it should be heading. Here are three key takeaways:

1. The ICH has one staff member, but it needs more to fulfill its duties.

As of Oct. 1, ICH Director Theresa Silla is the only staff member on the ICH.

Mayor Muriel Bowser's proposed budget for the year eliminated every position but Silla's. Though the D.C. Council found funding to restore a deputy director position, Rachel Joseph — chief of staff at the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services — said the ICH could not begin the hiring process until the beginning of the fiscal year on Oct. 1.

Frumin pushed back against the delay, saying it was important Silla had support while finalizing the ICH's annual needs assessment and work plan before the mayoral transition in January. Lawmakers deliberately funded the position to provide support during that period.

"It feels like not a great time to hold our breath and wait," Frumin said.

The issue of understaffing is nothing new for the ICH. Silla said the most staff she'd had was five, and one position focused on data collection was never filled. In the coming year, Silla said she won't be able to host as many committee and work group meetings, reducing the number of committees from five to two and the number of work groups from 19 to 11. The body will also alternate between forums month-to-month with recess time in between for Silla to work on deliverables.

Kate Coventry, director of legislative strategy at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, said the city needs to appropriately staff the ICH for the body to fulfill its responsibilities.

"I don't think we actually can get all this done with just the director, so I am nervous about us meeting our statutory mandates in this coming year," she testified.

2. The ICH has a big job, and it can't do it on its own.

During the hearing, Frumin walked Silla through some of the mandates of the HSRA. Though she listed the development of the body's new strategic plan, Homeward DC 3.0, and the annual work plan as successes of the ICH, Silla said other mandated responsibilities have been overlooked.

"In all of my time at the ICH, I think there's only been one annual update released," Community of Hope CEO Kelly Sweeney-McShane said during her testimony. She attributed that to the "overwhelming length of goals and priorities" in Homeward DC 1.0 and 2.0, saying the tighter focus of Homeward DC 3.0, which is shorter than past plans, could help the ICH accomplish its mission.

The HSRA also requires District agencies to audit the privately run entity that allocates homeless services contracts — the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP) — and report back to the ICH. Silla said, to her knowledge, neither the Department of Human Services, which funds most of the contracts, nor any other agency, had done an audit of TCP, for which D.C. approved a contract worth up to $385 million last year. Silla said the ICH has not attempted to enforce the statute.

Frumin questioned Silla on the issue for five minutes. He agreed it may not be the responsibility of the ICH to enforce the audit but said the D.C. Council does not want a "$385 million blind spot."

The ICH has also seen delays when working with other District agencies to confirm its members. The body is composed of representatives from D.C. government agencies and non-government members, including people with lived experience, and representatives from advocacy organizations, philanthropic organizations, and more. Under the HSRA, the mayor must nominate all non-government members and the D.C. Council must approve them.

However, the D.C. Council has not received nominations since 2024 as the ICH's nominations have not moved past the Mayor's Office of Talents and Appointments, according to Silla. This has left many people currently serving in community seats neither appointed nor confirmed.

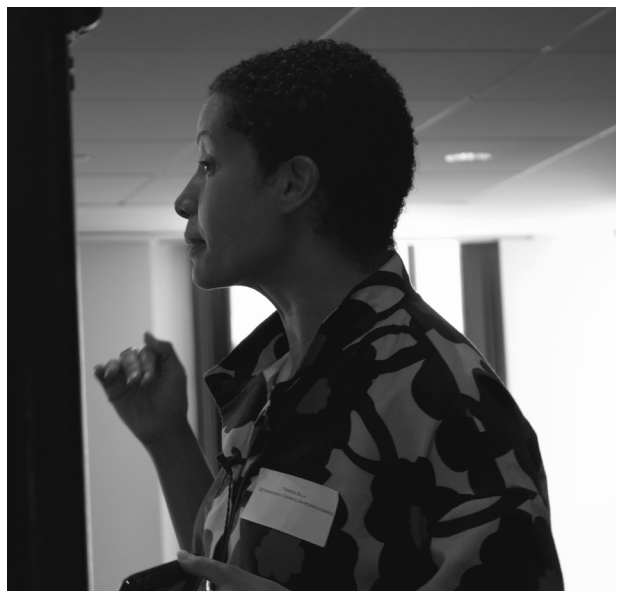
Without confirmed community members, Silla said, the ICH cannot meet quorum. So, government members have been voting to seat community members "tentatively," a process for which Silla said she has no supporting legal argument.

"We have historically had a little bit of leeway in terms of how we organize our meetings, how we conduct our business, and so I've continued to take some liberties with those flexibilities," she said.

3. ICH members agree on priorities but differ on scope and independence.

Several witnesses, including Sweeney-McShane, agreed the ICH should narrow its focus to five core tasks: serving as the governing body for the District's Continuum of Care — the District's network of homelessness services — and creating the five-year strategic plan, an annual work plan, an annual update, and the winter plan.

Witnesses also wanted the ICH to have a stronger relationship with the mayor. Jean-Michel Giraud and Lynn Amano of Friendship Place and Rachel White of DC Action called for a direct line to the mayor, and White even suggested moving the ICH to be housed within the Office of the City Administrator.



Theresa Silla, the executive director of the D.C. Interagency Council on homelessness, at a forum in July. Photo by Natalie Note

But Amber Harding, executive director of the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, brought a different perspective to both issues. "I think the right approach is to staff the ICH to meet its mandate, not to lower our expectations or reduce the mandate to meet its current staffing," she said.

Harding also advocated for increased independence from the mayor, saying members who report to the mayor or hold city contracts hesitate to speak up and that the efforts of the ICH are "impaired" by mayoral administrations who do not prioritize ending homelessness.

"I have seen even the most seemingly uncontroversial suggestions defeated at the ICH when the mayor's agency head opposes it," she said.

Under Bowser's mayoral administration, homelessness and social services have faced budget cuts. Ward 4 Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, the frontrunner to replace Bowser, has opposed these cuts and voted against Bowser's proposed budget, signaling a potential shift in the dynamic Harding described.

Witnesses also called for the ICH to have broader power to address the issues brought up in meetings. The body cannot currently set policy or direct funding decisions on its own.

"The ICH does a good job of listening, but it doesn't always take what it hears and fixes it," Coventry said, adding that has led to some frustration from people with lived experience.

Eric Johnson, a D.C. resident currently experiencing homelessness, echoed Coventry's point in his written testimony, asking, "When ICH identifies a systemic problem, what happens next?"

No formal legislation to amend the ICH's mandate has been introduced, and Frumin said any bill would receive its own hearing. Sweeney-McShane, who was involved in the 2005 legislation, said it's been long enough to warrant reevaluation.

"I think it is time to revisit the ICH legislation, including looking at responsibilities [and] what agencies should participate in staffing," she said. "It's been 21 years since it was first created, and while there have been minor adjustments, it feels like a good moment to revisit some of those components."

The hearing record is open until 5:00 p.m. on Oct. 14, so community members can still share testimony about the ICH on the D.C. Council website.

NEWS



Playtime Project opened its first physical location, giving children a place to play inside the Beltway Mall in Greenbelt. Photo courtesy of the Playtime Project

Playtime Project launches first community hub for childcare and play for homeless families

LUCY WONG RYNIEJSKI
Editorial Intern

When T'Roya Jackson entered the Brooks Family Shelter in D.C. with her five kids, she was not expecting to reunite with a program from her childhood.

Even today, Jackson remembers the volunteers who made growing up in D.C. homeless shelters with her mom endurable through play, helping her craft art projects into sticky masterpieces and choreograph dance routines in multipurpose rooms.

"You would have thought I was a child all over again," Jackson said, recalling the joyful moment she realized the Playtime Project — a nonprofit that offers an outlet for fun despite the instability of homelessness — served the Brooks.

For the past 23 years, Playtime Project volunteers and staff have been visiting shelters throughout Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County, offering support for caregivers and children through play. Play is essential in childhood development, the organization contends, but often overlooked in unstable living environments. Now the organization is expanding to serve more families with its first brick-and-mortar location in Greenbelt.

"We started in Washington D.C. as an initiative to support children and families in shelters and to help find a safe and developmentally appropriate place to play inside shelters and be an advocate for children's needs inside the family," Jamila Larson, founder and executive director of Playtime Project, said.

On Sept. 16, Playtime Project opened its first physical center in the Beltway Plaza Mall to serve as a community hub, daycare, and one-stop resource center for families of all kinds. Larson expects the organization will double its impact, with a full-time social worker, daycare center, afterschool programs, educational support, summer camps, expanded playtime programming, and teen support initiatives.

Jackson never expected to become homeless. She had a steady job, good credit, and was in the process of getting her special needs daughter diagnosed. But after lead poisoning forced her out of her apartment, Jackson said she couldn't find affordable housing and ended up in a temporary family shelter. Playtime gave her kids somewhere safe to make art projects and attend field trips while she fought for a place of their own.

This year, Jackson's family left the shelter and entered D.C.'s Rapid Rehousing program, a short-term subsidy that pays a portion of a family's or individual's rent for a market-rate apartment for 12 months while the participant works on education, job training, or finding employment. Despite having their own apartment, they noticed something missing — their community. Jackson said her kids would ask to Uber back to the shelter just to visit Playtime. According to Larson, this is a common sentiment for newly housed families.

"Families from our shelter partners often felt a sense of isolation once moving to more permanent housing," Larson wrote in a statement. "As grateful as they were to be housed, they were moving into empty apartments without the services and community they had in the shelter."

Mark Donnelly, board member for Playtime Project, sees the location as a huge step forward in creating a sense of safety amidst the instability in children's everyday lives. Before establishing a permanent facility, the nonprofit moved between shelters and hosted temporary events for families, potentially adding to the instability, he said.

"There's so much uncertainty in their lives already because they don't have housing security," Donnelly said. "But now we have the space… that kids can come to, and they can see that this is their space."

Thus far in 2026, Playtime has served 195 families. Seventy families have received specialized social work services, including connecting families with childcare support, food assistance, health care, legal aid, and more. With a home base, the nonprofit is able to provide more of these services to help parents, like Jackson, achieve long-term stability.

"It's the rare family who have escaped homelessness and got housed that all of a sudden enter the middle class or ever enter the middle class. They still need a ton of support. So we do help get to the root cause? By continuing to be there for families," Larson said.

According to the Youth Economic Justice Coalition, housing instability affects one in five youth in D.C. alone — severely harming physical health, mental health, and education. Playtime Project's team uses a trauma-informed approach when providing services. Volunteers and staff understand the circumstances a child might grow up in and build safe spaces that support emotional and cognitive recovery.

"We're all about exposing kids to new opportunities to help them imagine what their lives could be like, and help develop their identity beyond their housing status and beyond the community or neighborhood that they live in," Larson said.

With a physical space, Larson says she also hopes to expand the program for teens, who are a significant at-risk population. According to the National Network for Youth, youth under 18 with unstable housing are more vulnerable to physical violence and dropping out of school, which can have a debilitating impact on their development into adulthood.

"We see absolutely everything in terms of behavior and emotional needs of many traumas that families experienced through their homes," said Larson. "This location will just make it possible for us to welcome in those partnerships that we haven't been able to do [like working with teens]."

With a physical space, there are more opportunities for the Playtime Project to grow. The initiative hosted its first community program — a free book fair — and expects more to come.

Jackson said she loves the community hub's location in Beltway Plaza Mall. She plans on dropping off her kids at Playtime while running errands and having fun herself in the mall.

"We really pride ourselves in becoming our family's village. So now our doors are open however long you need us," Larson said.

Janeese Lewis George's plans to handle housing and homelessness in the District

Advocates and residents react to the prospective mayor's proposed housing platform

JAKE MITTLEMAN
Editorial Intern

Hundreds of Ward 2 residents packed the sprawling chapel of the Luther Place Memorial Church the evening of Sept. 30 to tell their presumptive new mayor their vision for the city. One topic people were eager to talk about? Housing.

Democratic nominee and current Ward 4 Councilwoman Janeese Lewis George is widely expected to win the November mayoral election. For many, a new mayor means the chance for new ideas and new energy. Ahead of the election this fall, Lewis George hosted a series of town halls across the city to hear from residents on what they'd like to see change in the city.

Street Sense attended two of the events and talked to a range of community members and housing advocates to understand how the community hopes Lewis George addresses housing affordability and homelessness in the District.

A handful of residents at Oct. 1's Ward 6 listening session, held at Capitol Hill United Methodist Church, shared their views on Lewis George's housing and homelessness policies, connecting them to their own experiences with affordability, displacement, and tenant protections.

Coy McKinney, a 17-year resident of D.C. who lives in Southwest, said housing is his top issue going into the election, particularly expanding permanently affordable housing through community land trusts, nonprofit organizations that own land and keep housing on it permanently affordable.

"So whether it's housing, education, [Janeese Lewis George] stands up to the plutocracy that's going on around us," McKinney said. "She's been the most consistent."

Bringing more affordable housing to the city is one of Lewis George's top campaign promises. Her proposal, outlined in a one-page document on her website, includes building 72,000 homes in five years, expanding rent stabilization, prioritizing affordable housing, reforming zoning laws, and streamlining the permitting process.

A 2022 study by the IZA Institute of Labor Economics estimated the District's housing supply is roughly 116,000 homes short of its potential, while the National Low Income Housing Coalition found a shortage of over 37,000 homes for extremely low-income renters. Dennis Sendros, lead for the D.C. chapter of the grassroots pro-housing network "Yes in My Back Yard" (YIMBY), is optimistic strong leadership can help D.C. overcome its housing shortage.

"It would mean a real all-of-the-above approach and a focused effort by the administration to get [the housing plan] done," Sendros said. "It could happen."

Sendros believes the administration's focus should be on building housing, fixing zoning laws, and reducing regulations that prevent new developments, including through D.C.'s Comprehensive Plan, which sets the legal and policy framework for future zoning decisions through 2050.

"What do we need for the next 25 years? We can't forecast that and frankly no one can," Sendros said. "So setting forth a FLUM [Future Land Use Map] that is genuinely bold and allows D.C. to grow for the next 25 years is vital."

While Sendros and his organization broadly support Lewis George's housing platform — DC YIMBY endorsed Lewis George in the primary — Sendros believes it misses the mark in some areas. For him, the biggest point of disagreement is Lewis George's support of expanding rent control, which he worries could disincentivize investment in multifamily homes. Supporters of expanding rent control generally argue it keeps rents affordable and protects tenants from displacement due to rent increases.

Monte Monash, a Ward 3 resident at the Oct. 1 listening session, said she was not very familiar with Lewis George's housing plan beyond the "top-line issues," but she understood the importance of housing affordability and appreciated the councilwoman's attention to it.

"Understanding what it means to families, especially if you're a household that has more than two people, it's really hard to find a place," Monash said. Housing costs in D.C. are more than double the national average, according to apartments.com.

A common criticism of development-based housing solutions is that new housing isn't always affordable to low-income residents. But Sendros pointed to a 2019 study finding new market-rate construction can open up lower-income housing markets as residents move into new units and free up homes elsewhere.

While most discussion centered around housing, a few attendees gave feedback on Lewis George's plans for homelessness as well. Laura Fuchs, president of the Washington Teachers Union and a Woodbridge resident, came to the Oct. 1 listening session primarily to hear the discussion on education but said she appreciates Lewis George's approach to homelessness.



Democratic nominee for mayor Janeese Lewis George speaks to D.C. residents at a town hall on Oct. 1. Photo by Jake Mittleman

"She prioritizes those whose needs are the greatest," Fuchs said. "She's been very strong about not wanting to disrupt encampments and harm people just trying to survive."

In a candidate questionnaire sent out by Street Sense earlier this year, Lewis George said her administration would not clear residents "without a stable path to permanent housing," a departure from the current administration. She also said she supported more funding for programs that bring people out of homelessness.

"As mayor, I will get DC back on track with funding a range of vouchers, from Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) to the Local Rent Supplement Program," Lewis George wrote. "They must be coupled with a comprehensive strategy that includes building more permanently affordable housing and providing the necessary supports to ensure stability for all residents."

Research by the National Library of Medicine has found permanent supportive housing is highly effective at keeping chronically homeless people housed.

Lewis George's approach to homelessness focuses heavily on what happens after someone loses housing. But advocates like Sendros argue the city also has to address the broader conditions that can push people into homelessness in the first place. For DC YIMBYs, that means pairing short-term responses such as shelters and services with policies aimed at increasing the overall supply of housing and reducing housing costs.

While separate issues, Sendros believes housing market conditions and a shortage of affordable homes are major causes of homelessness. A 2026 Bipartisan Policy Center report found housing affordability is a key structural driver of homelessness, citing research showing that communities with higher rents and tighter housing markets tend to experience higher rates of homelessness.

Lewis George's housing plan also includes expanding the government's role in providing housing, particularly for lower-income residents and people at risk of homelessness, through social housing.

Social housing, which Lewis George has referred to as "Dignified Homes DC," or "DC-owned mixed-income housing with stable rents," is another of her signature housing initiatives. It is distinct from D.C.'s existing public housing system, which is generally reserved for lower-income residents. Social housing, meanwhile, is designed to mix households at different income levels, with higher-income tenants paying a higher rent to support permanently affordable units in the same development.

Many residents at the event expressed hope and excitement for the future of housing in the District.

Nathan Hunter-El, a lifelong District resident and member of Empower D.C., a nonprofit organization that builds collective political power among low- and moderate-income Black and brown residents, has been active in housing issues in the city for years. He said at the Oct. 1 listening session he particularly supports Lewis George's emphasis on tenant rights.

"D.C. can fix these abandoned buildings up or use them for the homeless or for a family that's been displaced, but they don't," Hunter-El said. "We need a champion right now, no coward, we need someone who will fight for this city."

ART

The Grind, Ch. 11: Havoc in a New Jersey penthouse

JEFFERY MCNEIL
Artist/Vendor



Editor's Note: This is chapter 11 of "The Grind." You can read past chapters on our website.

Early October on the Jersey Shore — calm waves gave way to Nor'easter winds, whitecaps slamming the coast. Amid the chaos, Sin Delights stood tall, its neon lights cutting through the storm.

As the fog lifted, seagulls feasted on clams and crabs left by the night storm. Jackson slept soundly, oblivious to nature's wrath, until the 6 a.m. sun cut through his window and the gulls started squawking.

Then — a strange noise. On the balcony, a seagull perched on the rail, rummaged through the trash, found his half-eaten crab cake, and gulped it down. It leaned forward, raised its tail and…

Splat. Across Jackson's shining window.

Jackson saw the bird excrement and screamed, "What the f — !" Half-naked, he went from comatose to Usain Bolt, hurdling over the sofa. He didn't care he was 10 stories up.

"Come here, you motherf — !"

Like a javelin thrower, he launched his shoe, but the bird flew away with his crab cake. As the gull disappeared, Jackson surveyed the aftermath — the excrement, the trash, and the wreckage. Then he noticed a crab still wiggling among the debris.

"The bird eats the good stuff," he muttered. "Crabs, shrimp."

As he cleaned up the trash and wiped away the poop, he fumed, and lashed out at his plants. "What a fine start to the morning. What does a decent human being do to deserve this? I've been homeless, but seagulls crapping on my window doesn't get any lower."

Amidst all of the bad news, Jackson stayed calm; the poker player in him understood variance and grinned, "Dead people would wish to have my problems."

Jackson had always stayed cool during dry periods, but now he was starting to crack. "Why does a good guy like me deserve this?" he wondered. If he were Job, would he curse the gods?

He was accused of robbing children. Even if he beat the rap, he still faced lawsuits and legal damages. Nervous investors had canceled engagements and television interviews, while banks had cut his credit lines.

"How long could the bad news continue?" Jackson wondered. "Where were the victories?"

Worried, stressed, and anxious, Jackson turned to the only one who has been there for him in his time of need.

He fed Charlie, his goldfish.

"The world is against us. We are victims of a system that doesn't want us, but despite those that bet against us, we rise. What am I going to do? I have no skills, no degrees. All I know is if you have aces when you're across the table from me, I see it like a piece of broccoli stuck in your teeth when you smile. I like this lifestyle, but I don't know how to maintain it. Darrell — the dumbest shakedown artist that ever lived. What kind of extortionist tries to throw his golden goose in jail? If I end up in prison, he gets diddly."

Besides, he looked in the mirror and said, "I'm so pretty. I'm not meant to be behind penitentiary walls. Those criminals can't get this."

There was a loud knock at the door. Jackson opened it and found his cousin, Daniel "No Money" Hamilton. Jackson nicknamed him Y.U. — short for "Why you never have any money?"

"Yo, what up, cuz," said Daniel.

"What's up, my ass?" Jackson retorted. "Times are hard. The economy sucks. Blame Donald Trump."

Daniel smirked. "You got jokes." Daniel pulled out a bag and ran to the kitchen. "Let me get my equalizer."

"Don't do it, daddio," Jackson said. "If you pull out some hot shit, you won't be leaving out here today."

Daniel giggled and clapped, "That was a stella performance, pure drama." He reached into his bag. Jackson knew all of Daniel's merchandise was hot, but he stole the right stuff today. Daniel pulled out a state-of-the-art tackle box filled with hooks, fishing lures, Bass Pro gear, and a Shimano rod and reel. "They're catching stripers," Daniel said. "This is $500 retail. I'll take $250."

Jackson paused. As much as he hated giving his cousin money, he took a second look. Nice rod, he thought. Jackson glanced past Daniel and to the fishermen down on the beach.

It was a steal. Jackson pulled out the cash, then placed the blade in the tackle box.

"I can use it for stripers. Your broke ass did some good."

"Good day. And thank ya for doin business." Daniel grabbed the cash and was gone.

Jackson turned to Charlie. That $250 felt like losing a family member. Fear set in. For every dollar he bled, how was he gonna make it back? "Money's tight," he thought. "I can't afford to take shots." So he sat there in isolation, watching his fortune drip away.

Paranoia crept in. Jackson felt cornered. Darrell. His broke-ass family. He began to think out loud.

"When I was under the jetty, nobody called. Nobody sold me rods and reels. Everybody walked past me like I never existed."

Jackson began to yell, "These people weren't there for the harvest; they won't be there for the feast."

But the pressure behind Jackson's eyes was building. The headaches were getting worse. He wasn't broke, but he wasn't growing. He knew he needed to feed his bankroll. As he looked out the window, Jackson saw the valet, Mojo. They had bet on a basketball game once. Mojo owed him $11. Jackson looked at Charlie. "Watch this." He threw on sweats and raced down the escalator.

Jackson crept up behind Mojo and cornered him.

"Hey, sucka schuka," said Jackson. "Time to pay up. Where's my $11?"

Everyone watched him shake Mojo down.

"Where's it at?" Mojo turned ghost white as Jackson looked possessed. "Where's my money?" Mojo rustled through his pockets. Whoop, there it is, a crisp $10. Jackson held the bill up to the heavens.

"Money isn't the root of all evil," said Jackson. "But not having it will make me get medieval."

The attendants stared, thinking Jackson's lost it. A millionaire shaking down a doorman like he hit the jackpot. Jackson handed Mojo $2 back. "Don't go gambling with it."

An attendant muttered, "What an asshole. Hope he goes to jail."

Jackson left the parking lot doing a crip walk. "I got my money! No one goes through life liked by everyone. Even Jesus — fed the sick, raised the dead — and they still wanted him gone. Before they hated me, they hated Jesus first."

Watching Charlie swim peacefully, Jackson felt sadness wash over him. "Am I the crazy one," he wondered, "or has the world gone mad?"

"All I do is put myself out there, try to make people laugh, brighten somebody's day — and now I'm the villain."

On the dresser sat a photo of him and Darrell, smiling with their catches — Jackson holding a Jersey lobster, Darrell an albacore. Ten years ago they were brothers. Now Darrell wanted him gone.

Then Camille crossed his mind. He could — but what's the risk? Did he really want that smoke? Camille was fine like red wine, but high maintenance. Expensive. Not gonna be there for the harvest either. She was good, though — weaponizes that baby with sob stories. Wasn't eating. Needed a dentist. Couldn't afford school.

Jackson's caller ID said Camille. He weighed the cards in his hand — goldfish, a couple gallons of fresh water, some rocks, fish food, $30, Camille, pre-nup?

But the hormones outweighed the danger; like poker, he'd try to play responsibly. He answered. "What's up?"

"Jack… can you help me? I need $500. They're about to cut the lights off." Baby crying in the background. "Darrell's a monster. Hasn't paid child support." She was sobbing now. "Please help me."

This was an investment, Jackson thought, a low-cost, high-yield investment.

"Come over. We'll see what we can do."

She hung up. "Come by around six. I gotta hustle."

Jackson grinned. He didn't know if Camille was an ally or playing him, but now Camille was in the middle of two men, one a bully, while Jackson was strategic, always one step ahead of the games people play.

He looked at that photo. "Betrayal is a motherf —," Jackson thought. "The man saved my life once." He remembered the lake. Two white kids surrounded him and threw him in. He couldn't swim. They stood there laughing as he struggled and sank. Panic gripped him, cold water clawing at his throat. He thought he was done.

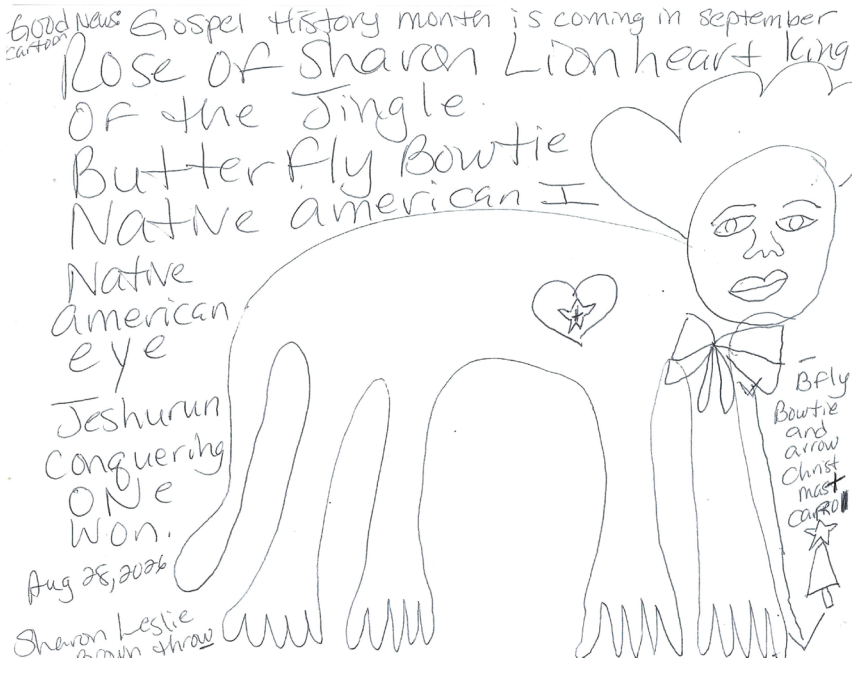
Then Darrell came charging in like a black buffalo — pummeled the two kids, dove in after him, and dragged him to shore. Both coughing, shivering. Jackson lay there trying to catch his breath, shaking from more than the cold, clinging to Darrell like a life raft. After that day, gratitude turned to loyalty. He owed Darrell his life. Trusted him. Every time he saw him, that rush of loyalty hit — like nothing could break the bond. They were inseparable.

Now it was a high-stakes duel, no more what went wrong, no smoothing it over. "Darrell wanted to take him out," thought Jackson. "He went for it, and I woke up still here."

Jackson grinned as he thought, "My turn; I got next."



SHARON BROWN
Artist/Vendor



Instincts



JACQUELINE TURNER
Artist/Vendor

I think. You think. We think.
They are built in the way we feel.
Instincts make us think of our mortality
and how we live our lives.

Whether we live fast
or live slow,
none of us know
when we're
going to go.

Our instincts are
with us from birth.
They tell us
what is good for us.

2026 so far



ANDRE BALTIMORE
Artist/Vendor

New Year's Day, roughed up from New Year's party. Didn't make the trip for the second straight New York ball drop and dance. This coming year is 2027, but for 2026, first things first is to hop into gear with six months remaining. I have completed two novels and 25 paintings. I wish to have them framed next year and auction them in New York for some New Year's fun that night. Meanwhile, I have plans to attend Duke University for a little spell and see basketball for fun. I love watching Monday night Duke Blue Devils games and some Tar Heels, which never come on Friday and Saturday, just straight bewilderment dribbling. Next up for me, if I don't make the major in hardball baseball, I was a good high schooler with All-American baseball status. I even had a grand slam in the championship playoff game.

My year in review



ERIC THOMPSON-BEY
Artist/Vendor

We're almost three-quarters through 2026! Like many other years, it has downs and ups, outs and ins, forwards and backwards.

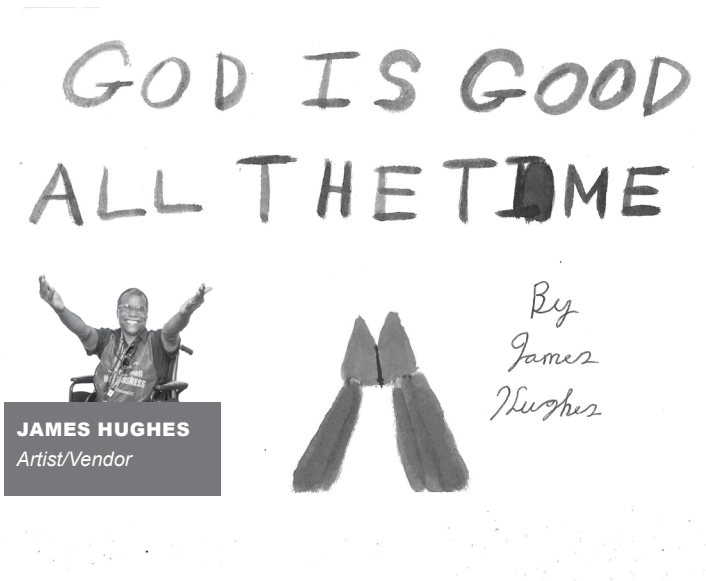
My year began more positively than I expected: In January, the dry gangrene in my toe healed. That was offset two months later when I was locked up in the D.C. Jail for something I did not do. I certainly did not expect that. I couldn't go to my apartment for two months. First I slept for five days outside the National Archives, which of course was very uncomfortable. Then someone I knew invited me to stay with him. That situation was also unpleasant. Yes, I was housed, but my host and I didn't get along very well.

In July, I had to return to the hospital to treat the gangrene after it came back. After two weeks of treatment, I was healed as well as a person can be against gangrene. Then another downer: I injured my Achilles tendon while cycling. But I'm treating it, and it's healing.

Now some really great news: I achieved three major milestones:

March 10: 10 years in my apartment!
March 17: 18 months without smoking!
Sept. 16: 14 years of FREEDOM!!

How did I accomplish my Triple Crown? With Street Sense. And with God.



JAMES HUGHES
Artist/Vendor

Nights without sleeping on the streets



CARLTON JOHNSON
Artist/Vendor

Life in the streets
of the nation's capital
can bring awesome blessings
of hope with dreams of being
  off the streets into a place
  of my own so that I may
  feel at the top of my game
  of life of new things
that keep me free
for the blessings
on hold for me

It's the time that I
look for every day
of the week with all
blessings for my life
  of sleepless days
  and nights on those
  nightly streets of loneliness
  on the concrete streets
with nights of looking
near the park for some
sleep so that I will have
money after I lie down
  and have fallen off
  to sleep and the blessing
  of the new day on the streets
  of nights without sleep

Captured memories



SASHA WILLIAMS
Artist/Vendor

The painting was for my birthday. It was a picture of a photo I had from when she was a baby, and I got a blow-out hairstyle. I have to find it. The talent show was actually rescheduled, but it took place in February, if I'm not mistaken about the date. I have to find the photo that she was inspired by.



A painting Eboni submitted for the art showcase, Art for Liberation, at her school. Photo by Sasha Williams

ART





RENEECE BRINKLEY
Artist/Vendor

A letter to the readers



JACQUELINE GALE
Artist/Vendor

Hello fellow readers,

While AI, websites, games, and emails are highly useful and popular, we must consider the limits of technology. Man-made innovations, such as attempts to create artificial human organs, challenge natural boundaries. This mirrors historical missteps, such as prioritizing wealth over spiritual well-being.

Furthermore, environmental issues like global warming could be linked to satellite technology altering the sun's rays. To address this, we should consider replacing satellite networks with ground-based communication systems. As a collective, we need to address these technological developments to prevent the negative consequences of greed from affecting our future.

Trade-ins

WENDY BROWN
Artist/Vendor

These can be a valuable source of income because they can be used in a revolving way. Going to meetings, you can have your articles published even if you don't have a printer. Go uptown. Uptown is the best money, but you can get money in the south, too. Dinner with these people will be described as fun and energetic.

Get extra sugar and cream. The head chef gives seconds, and water is free. Use chapstick. Say thank you. Be nice and polite, not rude. Watching TV is optional, of course. High class and manners. Touch typing, taking to Northwest, or Sixth and H, U Street, or the like. Stop at Progress Place to visit important people. Large families too are surprisingly present and conscious.

Space limited up against wall. Stocked high, piled down, stored expenses frame future goals. Poetic faith and hope of victorious liberation for the free food. You can't take my joys.

Well, they say the unexpected caller is explicable.

Fall



ANTHONY CARNEY
Artist/Vendor

Fall is the time of year to fall back. The leaves will change to all types of colors: orange, yellow, and brown. So get your rake out and get raking. Halloween is the time of year when the kids will go out and have fun: "Trick or treat." So let the kids go out and get their treats. Be careful of the children: you might see a ghost or two. Watch out for Peter the Pumpkin Eater; he might get you.

Reflections

JACQUES COLLIER
Artist/Vendor



Images in a mirror
are a lot cleaner
when they are seen
by many and anyone

Crystal clear
to a listening ear
when our mind is in gear
life ties many lessons
full of reflections

Smarts

REGINALD BLACK
Artist/Vendor



high degree of ability
having mentality
with bold impolite or rude
stylish elegant appearance
appealing to taste
fashionable by society
tastes of characteristics
able altered during flight
automation by operation
processing for data
greater versatility
often sharp forceful strength
to be the cause
sharp stinging pain
distress remorse embarrassment
a heavy penalty
local grief remorse
poignant pain
a stinging pain
distress
marked by vigorous strength
forceful activity built in
patronized in dress
in an impolite way rude
the ability of a high mental degree

Grinding all I know

APOLLOS ROBINSON
Artist/Vendor



Grinding all I know;
Grinding all I know;
Grinding all I know;
Grinding all I know;
Grinding all I know!!!

Get stuck and stagnant if you mope and grope
Got up on my hustle instead of claiming broke
Because
Grinding all I know

Taking trips on boats we know we'll never own
    Bodies of water in my city turned to single-family homes
Pray every member of my family able to afford headstones
    They prey on me, but I won't ever fold
Especially when it's got something to do with
    Exceeding milestones and completing goals

YEAH,
Grinding all I know

Fourth quarter

ZERO
Artist/Vendor

Tying isn't winning. Sustainment is always loss due to the passing of time. And it will all be for naught, the instances when you mastered the game. It means nothing. What you thought you knew is no more.

Will there ever truly be another chance? Tonight it may be the end. To think the start of the end has begun now, just now. Did you hear it? Under this noise, under this pressure, did you hear it? That just now was a second ago. You are a second away from being second. And now it's a second ago, and you think you can win?

Do you care enough? I mean, do you really care? Have you ever cared at all? And even if you think what's to come isn't a harder time, a second ago you may have realized it was more. More than you could ever imagine.

The presupposition that you were in the game implies you wanted to play. Which suggests you wanted to win. And for you not to be up? Well, that just could not be me.

I'm chillin' on the left bench, smokin dubbies, hollerin' at your wife or daughter... or mom.

Why, people



GRETA CHRISTIAN
Artist/Vendor

Why do people act like they don't care about the homeless?

Why don't they help homeless people?
Homeless people all over the world need help.

They have to sleep outside in the heat and in the rain.
People need to take more time with and be kinder to homeless people.

The right people need to provide the homeless with affordable, low-income housing near other people in communities where the homeless can buy things they need to stay healthy.

Can you answer these questions?

DANIEL BALL
Artist/Vendor



Do you know what the word “consider” means?
Do you know what the word “nature” means?
Do you know what the words “love you” mean?
Do you know what the word “community” means?
Do you know what the word “sex” means?
Do you know what the word “wife” means?
Do you know what the word “husband” means?
Do you know what the word “hate” means?
Do you know what the word “evil” means?
Do you know what the word “good” means?
Do you know what the word “hot” means?
Do you know what the word “cold” means?

Sweet dreams

CARLOS CAROLINA
A.K.A. POETIC JUSTICE
Artist/Vendor



Do you see it the way that you dreamed it?

Do you believe that dreams are only
meant to be achieved?

For the ones who see it will be the
ones who truly succeed.

And that’s success.

And it’s a whole lot of preparation
that goes into the process before it
blooms and manifests,

But know that it will bloom and manifest.

For as long as you know that the
eyes are the window to the soul, and
the soul is the belief of the heart —

Then believe with all your heart and achieve
whatever it is you are chasing when you dream.

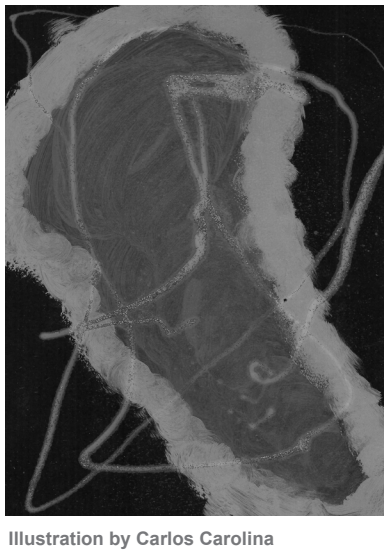


Illustration by Carlos Carolina

Let go, let god

DOMINIQUE ANTHONY
Artist/Vendor



Content warning: This piece discusses suicide and uses strong language.

Let go; let god take care of your needs
Believe in yourself and don’t give up on life
This is about suicide prevention
Please talk to someone if you’re going through something
I see my therapist and go to my doctor’s appointments
I remember when I tried killing myself,
And I had to check myself into the hospital
I was hanging on by a string
My favorite song was playing with my heart and soul
I was a “Fool For You” like CeeLo Green; I was trippin bad
But god got me through it, and I know everybody ain’t your friend
And the shit was not cool, but I am feeling better now
It was my so-called best friend who took my man
And acted like they did nothing wrong;
Karma is real bitch, and I was so hurt
We were friends for 40 years; why hurt me like that?
But I have to give it to her and not him
“Pain Is Love,” like Ja Rule; that’s one of my favorite songs,
And I understand what he was saying

The world is not together anymore

ABEL PUTU
Artist/Vendor



Because of social distancing.

And the National Guard occupies our streets. And the military robots are coming next. And if you’re not working, you won’t be able to be on the streets, because if you are, they will put you in a camp. And that’s not just in the District; it’s around the world.

Soon — really soon — before you do anything, you will have to clear it with an AI military robot. There will be robot social workers for the whole world, and no more help for those who need it most. We are coming to the new world order, in which there will be a robot president for everyone in the world.

Shayla in the fall

BRIANNA BUTLER
Artist/Vendor



My dog Shayla loves the coolness of the air while walking with me. She jumps and rolls into the grass and the leaves in our backyard. We be in there all day playing ball. She pushes the ball with her nose across the ground, making leaves fly all over her body. By this time we are tired, so we go in and often have a snack or two (okay, three when we’re really beat).

Shayla often lies out by the window on our soft, round burgundy rug I made for her so she can feel the breeze. Later in the afternoon, she wants to go to the playground to meet other people and their dogs. (The dogs matter more, of course.) She loves sliding down the spiral clusters. She and her friends also love racing through the hoops and tubes and then going in, out, and over obstacles. They may even play tag, after which they’ll get treats they love to eat.

While they play, we humans are laughing and giggling about our dogs winning a race. Naturally, we all say our dog is the fastest, even when it isn’t. Then they ask how smart Shayla is, and I go, “As smart as the average bear.”

My journey

TONYA WILLIAMS
Artist/Vendor



I went out of town with my church members for five days and nights; we left Monday, Sept. 14. We went to Cincinnati, Ohio. On Tuesday, we went to the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky. I observed the Garden of Eden. It was so beautiful. I really like to enjoy the beauty of God’s creation and his animals.

We went to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. That was a very interesting show and told us about freedom and taught us about slavery. Thank God for freedom.

From there we went on the riverboat in Newport, Kentucky. The cruise was about an hour and a half. Thursday in Williamstown, Kentucky, was very, very interesting. I walked on an ark like Noah built. It was such an experience, learning a lot about our Creator. He is our most high God in heaven.
Thank you, Jesus, for this journey.

Building a mystery

KYM PARKER
Artist/Vendor



We work in this world
We tell ourselves what to choose
We tell ourselves to love
A choice to know
Building
The vampire story
Blood feeds us all
To eat,
To know when to feed
Running,
Feeling the first bite,
Understanding all of this is a choice

Building a mystery,
God’s love builds us stronger,
Building love, respect, compassion
The choice to choose
Good or evil —
That’s always there

Building ourselves every day,
Thanking God for everything she’s done
And everything she hasn’t done
Building a mystery,
To know it,
To feel it,
To get it right

To know when we give up
And know when we are strong
Choose
Faith,
Health
Choose God

FUN & GAMES

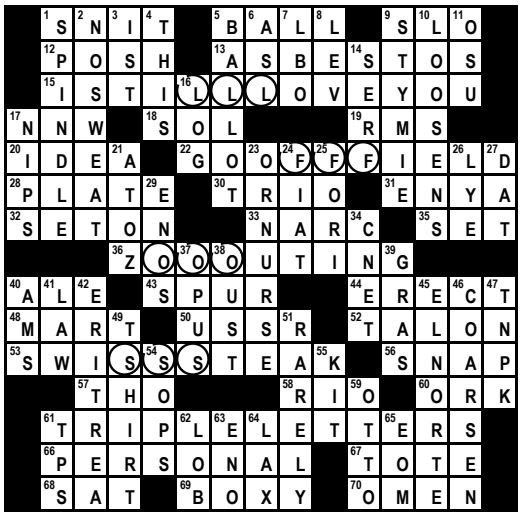
Across

1. ____ Bay Buccaneers, of the NFL
6. Electrical resistance units
10. Pulitzer-winning writer James who penned "A Death in the Family"
14. What Fuzzy Wuzzy was (1,4)
15. Polite permission-seeking query (2 wds.) (3,1)
16. N.Y.C. home of Warhol's "Campbells Soup Cans" and van Gogh's "The Starry Night" (abbr./init.)
17. 'Ammo' for a starter pistol (2 wds.) (5,10)
20. ____ packing (booted out)
21. Study of significant past events and notable figures that might definitely include visits to 16-Across and other cultural sites (2 wds.) (3,7) (HAIRY TORTS anagram)
22. Torpedo sandwich or torpedo shooter, briefly
24. Immigration enforcement grp. much in the news for many months now (abbr./init.)
25. Late director Reiner
28. Dairy case containers used in the 80s and 90s to help find missing children by featuring their photos (2 wds.) (4,7)
35. Artillery fragments
37. Black-and-white cookie
38. Stringed Renaissance instruments
39. ... really____ a number on
41. ____ point (center of attention)
42. Corn ___ (Southern cake dish)
43. "Do not fold, spindle or ____" (inscription on many an old IBM punch card)
45. Animated movie featuring Donald, Daisy or Daffy (2 wds.) (4,7)
49. Plea at sea (abbr./init.)
50. ___ Kosh B'Gosh (giant in overalls)
51. Math function hidden in "Her professor's email address ends with .edu"
53. Thick-skinned safari beast with a single horn (NEROS CHOIR anagram)
59. 1961 space chimp
63. Be forced to retrace your prior steps... or, parsed slightly differently, what solvers must do to correctly fill in the answers circled squares? (3 wds.) (4,2,9)
65. Times past
66. Fraternity party attire, perhaps
67. Wane, as an incoming tide surge
68. "___ it the truth!"
69. Jamaican musical pieces
70. As of this point in time (2 wds.) (2,3)

Down

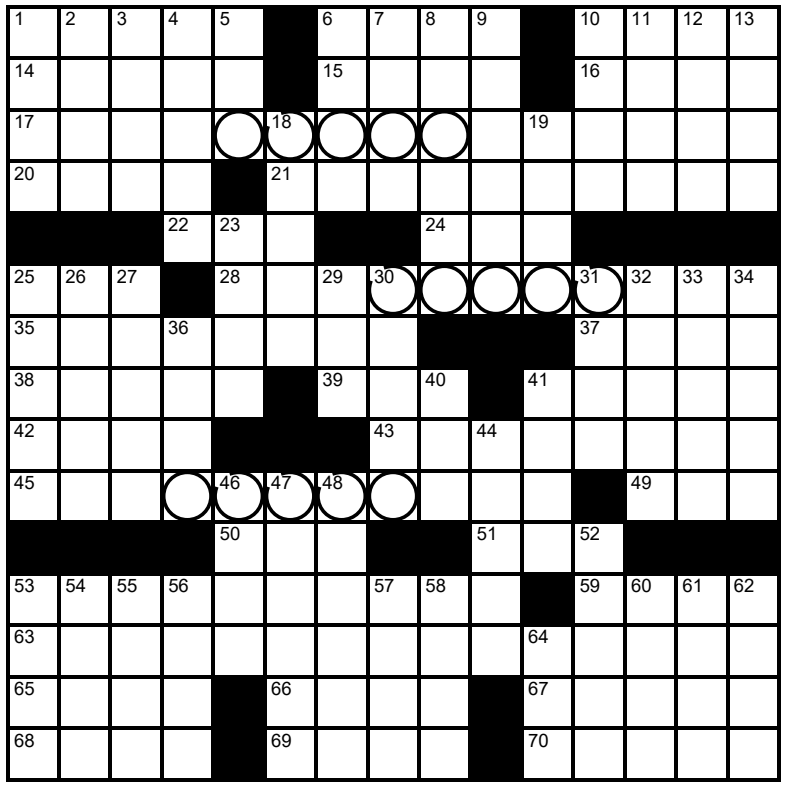
1. Keep ___ on (watch)
2. Ready and willing's partner
3. Part of G.M.T.
4. Imitates a hot dog
5. "Raiders of the Lost ___"
6. Actor Epps
7. Actor/comedian Kevin ____ of Netflix's "Acting My Age"
8. Of legend (MY ITCH anagram)
9. Watergate Judge John who was Time's 1973 Man of the Year
10. Any one of the 27 changes made to the U.S. Const. as initially adopted (abbr.)
11. Kind of dancer that often wore boots (2-2)
12. The "E" of E.M.T. (abbr.)

LAST EDITION'S PUZZLE SOLUTION



13. ____ peasy lemon squeezy
18. "Uncle Tom's ____" (Stowe's classic pre-Civil War novel)
19. Bohemian river into the Elbe (RISE anagram)
23. Some professional squatters who are paid by MLB?
25. Followed invitation instructions (abbr.) (incls. Fr. init.)
26. State school SE of Columbus, in brief (4,1) (incls. abbr.)
27. Rodeo bucker, for short
29. Chaired, as a meeting
30. Austrian painter Gustav ____ of "The Kiss"
31. An awl, an axe, a plane or pliers
32. Killer whales
33. "Peachy!"
34. Footwear undersides
36. Fashion model Wek
40. Twosome
41. Discovery
44. "I hesitate ____, but have you put on some...? (2 wds.) (2,3)
46. Geezer
47. Scarves worn to the races (COATS anagram)
48. A small, speedy African antelope, the spelling of whose name was slightly changed when it was chosen as the name for a popular athletic shoe brand
52. Word associated with certain headgear and certain horse races
53. Actress Perlman of "Cheers"
54. Mata ___ (spy)
55. "Terrible" czar
56. Cozy home in a Cedar or Cottonwood
57. Music of India
58. Edible tubers of South America
60. Indian bread
61. Prefix meaning "eight"
62. Slant or misrepresent, as data
64. Typewriter key near the "Q"

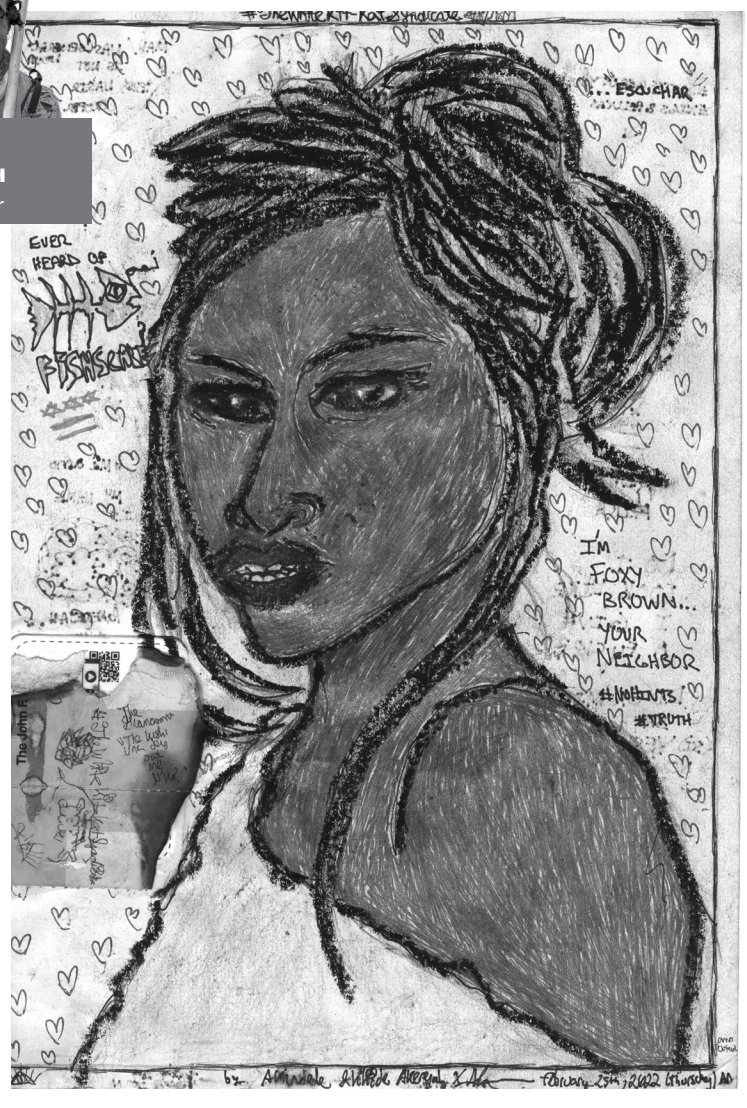
This crossword puzzle is the original work of Patrick "Mac"McIntyre. It is provided to us courtesy of Real Change News, a street paper based in Seattle, Washington. Learn more about Real Change News and the International Network of Street Papers at realchangenews.org and insp.ngo.



PIECE OF THE WEEK



AKINDELE AKEREJAH
Artist/Vendor



COMMUNITY SERVICES

SHELTER HOTLINE
Línea directa de alojamiento
(202) 399-7093

YOUTH HOTLINE
Línea de juventud
(202) 547-7777

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE
Línea directa de violencia doméstica
1-800-799-7233

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH HOTLINE
Línea de salud del comportamiento
1-888-793-4357

Housing/Shelter *Vivienda/alojamiento*
Education *Educación*
Health Care *Seguro*
Clothing *Ropa*
Legal Assistance *Assistencia Legal*
Laundry *Lavandería*
Case Management *Coordinación de Servicios*
Food *Comida*
Employment Assistance *Assitencia con Empleo*
Transportation *Transportación*
Showers *Duchas*

All services listed are referral-free

Academy of Hope Public Charter School
202-269-6623 // 2315 18th Pl. NE
202-373-0246 // 421 Alabama Ave. SE
aohdc.org

Bread for the City
1525 7th St., NW // 202-265-2400
1700 Marion Barry Ave., SE // 202-561-8587
breadforthecity.org

Calvary Women's Services // 202-678-2341
1217 Marion Barry Ave., SE
calvaryservices.org

Catholic Charities // 202-772-4300
catholiccharitiesdc.org/gethelp

Central Union Mission // 202-745-7118
65 Massachusetts Ave., NW
missiondc.org

Charlie's Place // 202-929-0100
1830 Connecticut Ave., NW
charliesplacedc.org

Christ House // 202-328-1100
1717 Columbia Rd., NW
christhouse.org

Church of the Pilgrims // 202-387-6612
2201 P St., NW *(1-1:30 on Sundays only)*
churchofthepilgrims.org/outreach

Community Family Life Services
202-347-0511 // 4860 Fort Totten Dr, NE
cflsdc.org

Community of Hope // 202-232-7356
4 Atlantic St., NW
communityofhopedc.org

Covenant House Washington
202-610-9600 // 2001 Mississippi Ave., SE
covenanthousedc.org

D.C. Coalition for the Homeless
202-347-8870 // 1234 Massachusetts Ave., NW
dccfh.org

Father McKenna Center // 202-842-1112
19 North Capitol St., NW
fathermckennacenter.org

Food and Friends // 202-269-2277
(home delivery for those suffering from HIV, cancer, etc)
219 Riggs Rd., NE
foodandfriends.org

Foundry Methodist Church // 202-332-4010
1500 16th St., NW
foundryumc.org/idministry

Identification services

Friendship Place // 202-364-1419
4713 Wisconsin Ave., NW
friendshipplace.org

Georgetown Ministry Center // 202-338-8301
1041 Wisconsin Ave., NW
georgetownministrycenter.org

Jobs Have Priority // 202-544-9096
1526 Pennslyvania Ave., SE
jobshavepriority.org

Loaves & Fishes // 202-232-0900
1525 Newton St., NW
loavesandfishesdc.org

Martha's Table // 202-328-6608
marthastable.org
2375 Elvans Rd, SE

2204 Martin Luther King Ave. SE

Miriam's Kitchen // 202-452-8926
2401 Virginia Ave., NW
miriamskitchen.org

My Sister's Place // 202-529-5991 (24-hr hotline)
mysistersplacedc.org

N Street Village // 202-939-2076
1333 N St., NW
nstreetvillage.org

New York Avenue Shelter // 202-832-2359
1355-57 New York Ave., NE

Patricia Handy Place for Women
202-733-5378 // 810 5th St., NW

Samaritan Inns // 202-667-8831
2523 14th St., NW
samaritaninns.org

Samaritan Ministry
202-722-2280 // 1516 Hamilton St., NW
202-889-7702 // 1345 U St., SE
samaritanministry.org

Sasha Bruce Youthwork // 202-675-9340
741 8th St., SE
sashabruce.org

So Others Might Eat (SOME) // 202-797-8806
71 O St., NW
some.org

St. Luke's Mission Center // 202-363-4900
3655 Calvert St., NW
stlukesmissioncenter.org

Thrive DC // 202-737-9311
1525 Newton St., NW
thrivedc.org

Unity Health Care
unityhealthcare.org
- Healthcare for the Homeless Health Center: 202-508-0500
- Community Health Centers: 202-469-4699

1500 Galen Street SE, 1251-B Saratoga Ave NE, 1660 Columbia Road NW, 4414 Benning Road NE, 3924 Minnesota Avenue NE, 765 Kenilworth Terrace NE, 850 Delaware Ave., SW, 3240 Stanton Road SE, 3020 14th Street NW, 425 2nd Street NW, 4713 Wisconsin Avenue NW, 2100 New York Avenue NE, 1333 N Street NW, 1355 New York Avenue NE, 1151 Bladensburg Rd., NE, 4515 Edson Pl., NE

Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
1200 U St., NW // 202-328-5500
legalclinic.org

The Welcome Table // 202-347-2635
1317 G St., NW.
epiphanydc.org/thewelcometable

Whitman-Walker Health
1525 14th St., NW // 202-745-7000
1201 Sycamore Dr., SE
whitman-walker.org

Woodley House // 202-830-3508
2711 Connecticut Ave., NW

*For further information and listings, visit our online service guide at StreetSenseMedia.org/**service-guide***

JOB BOARD

Dishwasher – Smoke & Mirrors

AC Hotel Capitol Hill/Navy Yard // Washington, D.C.

Onsite

Wash and sanitize dishes, cookware, and utensils; maintain kitchen cleanliness; and support the culinary team.

Requirements: Previous dishwashing or kitchen experience preferred, teamwork, reliability, and commitment to safety and sanitation standards.

Pay: $19–$22.80/hour

Apply: shorturl.at/RSqXv

Housekeeper Room Care

AC Hotel Capitol Hill/Navy Yard // Washington, D.C.

Onsite

Clean and service guest rooms, replenish linens and supplies, report maintenance issues, and respond to guest requests.

Pay: $18.35–$22/hour

Apply: shorturl.at/zQPp1

Security Guard – Unarmed Patrol

Allied Universal // Washington, D.C.

Full-Time (Onsite)

Patrol the property, monitor access, assist tenants and visitors, and prepare incident reports. Paid training is provided.

Requirements: Age 18+, high school diploma or equivalent, customer service experience preferred.

Pay: $24.44/hour

Apply: shorturl.at/njkeY

*Hiring? Send your job postings to **esmat**@StreetSenseMedia.org*

STREET SENSE MEDIA AUDIENCE SURVEY

Street Sense Media loves our readers! Our award-winning newspaper is the core of what we do. Our low-barrier vendor employment program is built upon it. Our journalists cover local issues affecting real people and feature our vendors' voices, defying market trends in media. So thank you for taking this survey, because we're on pins and needles to know what you think about our newspaper!

How long have you supported SSM?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ Over 5 years

How often do you purchase 'Street Sense?'

- ☐ This is my first purchase!
- ☐ Every two weeks
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ A few times a year

Why do you purchase 'Street Sense?' Select all that apply.

- ☐ To support the vendor financially
- ☐ To support SSM as an organization
- ☐ To read content by a specific vendor
- ☐ For art and opinions from the unhoused community generally
- ☐ For news on homelessness and poverty
- ☐ Other: _____

How often do you visit the SSM website (streetsensemedia.org)?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Several times a year
- ☐ I've never visited the website

If you turn down a copy of 'Street Sense,' why? Select all that apply.

- ☐ I always buy it
- ☐ I already bought it from someone else
- ☐ Personal financial circumstances
- ☐ Vendors' sales pitch wasn't convincing
- ☐ Cover story didn't grab my interest
- ☐ I wanted to buy it but didn't see a vendor
- ☐ Other: _____

What's a program, issue, individual, inequity, or other story in D.C. you want to see more reporting on? Think about an issue where reporting could have a big impact on people experiencing homelessness and homeless services.

_____

_____

_____

What topics related to homelessness (i.e. shelters, encampments, homelessness among specific demographic groups, affordability, vouchers, public housing, the social safety net, homelessness policy) concern you the most?

_____

_____

_____

How do you interact with SSM online? Select all that apply.

- ☐ The streetsensemedia.org website
- ☐ X/Twitter
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Linkedin
- ☐ Subscribe to the podcast
- ☐ Subscribe to the fundraiser emails
- ☐ Subscribe to the editor's newsletter
- ☐ I do not interact with SSM online
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

If you're not subscribed to the editor's newsletter, why not?

_____

_____

_____

Where would you like to be able to buy 'Street Sense' but can't find a vendor? (Describe an intersection, neighborhood, landmark or cross-streets.)

_____

_____

_____

Have you ever donated to SSM? Select all that apply. (FYI, making a contribution to one of our vendors is great, but it doesn't pay the SSM bills.)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I didn't know SSM needs donations

Of course you love 'Street Sense!' But what can we improve? No idea is too small.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

RESPOND

Please mail your survey to:
Street Sense, Inc.
1317 G Street NW
Washington D.C. 20005

TAKE IT ONLINE

bit.ly/SSMSurvey2026

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

(the following questions are all optional)

What is your age?

- ☐ Under 21
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-45
- ☐ 46-60
- ☐ 61 or over

What is your racial/ ethnic background?

- ☐ Hispanic/Latinx
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Middle Eastern/Northern African
- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Other (please specify):

_____

What is your household income?

- ☐ Under $20,000
- ☐ $20,000 to $39,999
- ☐ $40,000 to $59,999
- ☐ $60,000 to $79,999
- ☐ $80,000 to $99,999
- ☐ $100,000 to $200,000
- ☐ Over $200,000

What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Non-binary/non-conforming
- ☐ Prefer not to respond
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe:

_____

What is/was your employment sector?

- ☐ Arts/entertainment
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Figuring things out
- ☐ Finance/business
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Industrial/manufacturing
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Media/communications
- ☐ Nonprofit
- ☐ Politics
- ☐ Retail/service
- ☐ Science/technology
- ☐ Security/policing
- ☐ Stay-at-home parent
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Other (please specify):

_____

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ No high school diploma or GED
- ☐ High school diploma or GED
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Advanced degree

Thank you for reading Street Sense!

From your vendor, _____

OCT. 7 - OCT. 20, 2026 | VOLUME 23 ISSUE 24

NO CASH? NO PROBLEM. **WE HAVE AN APP!**
SEARCH "STREET SENSE MEDIA" IN THE APP STORE

International Network of Street Papers
WWW.INSP.NGO

3.2 million READERS

5,700 VENDORS

90+ STREET PAPERS

35 COUNTRIES

25 LANGUAGES