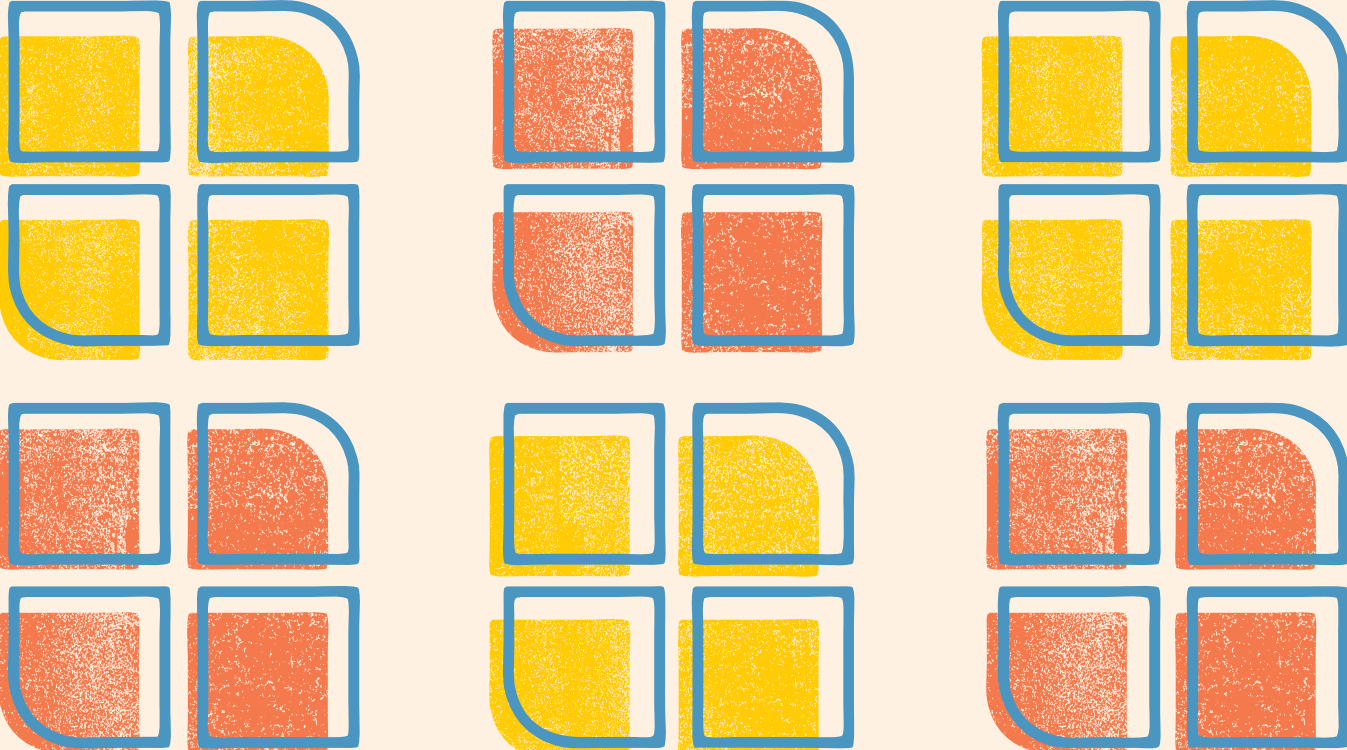


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# Lotus Campaign

## 2022 Impact Report

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# Mission

**TO INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY ENGAGING THE FOR-PROFIT SECTOR AS A PARTNER IN THE SOLUTION.**

# Vision

**The scope of homelessness in America is beyond the capacity of the public and nonprofit sectors to address alone. Lotus Campaign is building a new model that brings together the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to create sustainable, scalable solutions and lasting impact.**



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Co-Founder and Executive Director

Dear Friends,

## “DO YOU REALLY THINK HOMELESSNESS IS SOLVABLE?”

I get this question often. While frustrating, it's understandable, especially when most see the problem escalating in their communities.

Yet there's another side of the story – a hopeful side of homelessness we're thrilled to show you here. And it's why I say “Yes” whenever I am asked.

Lotus Campaign launched nearly five years ago to create an innovative approach rooted in nontraditional partnerships. To open new doors, we brought together the social services sector – experts in trauma-informed care – and those that have available housing – the private real estate sector. The Lotus model removes risks and barriers, including spotty housing history or bad credit, that typically exist for a landlord to rent to someone unhoused, by guaranteeing rent and providing economic incentives to remove economic risk. And our Landlord Participation Program seeks to break the unrelenting cycle of homelessness by intentionally housing individuals in communities where they can strengthen all parts of their lives and facilitate long-term support through our social service partners.

Innovation is the outcome of deploying existing resources in a different way. And the issue of homelessness was long overdue for innovation – and hope. Here, you'll learn it's working and why my “Yes” is a resounding one.

In the last year, Lotus met the critical landmark of having sponsored nearly 400 individuals in stable, secure housing. Additionally, Lotus has supported 186 renewals, with some residents renewing more than once and 109 who have graduated to housing themselves. Our first impact investment, a multifamily apartment complex owned by Lotus, reserves 20% of its units for Lotus Campaign residents, proving you can do good and do well. New inroads have been carved that will make it possible to take our model to a new city. Four additional landlords and social service organizations joined our program. We created a “Foundation Fund” to provide residents graduating from our program with a hand up as they support themselves. Finally, we continued to educate, through this report, events, and conversations, on the realities of why someone ends up unhoused and why solving homelessness will require systems change.

Our work leads with hope because there is hope. That hope exists because of you.

**Together, we are solving the unsolvability of homelessness.**

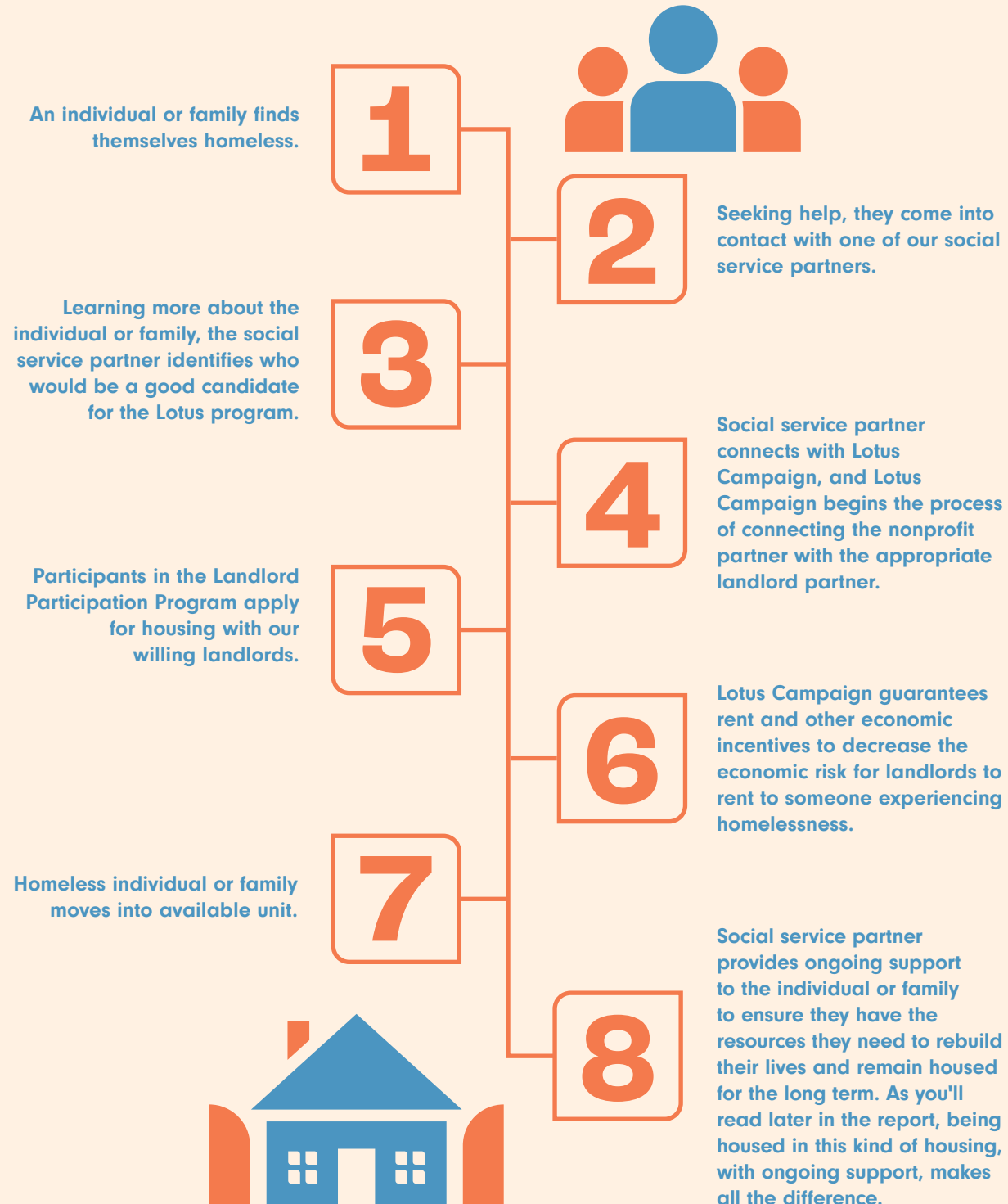
With Gratitude,

*Beth Silverman*

# The Model

## A COLLABORATIVE JOURNEY TO STABLE, LASTING HOUSING

Lotus Campaign provides a critical intermediary role between those that know the most about people experiencing homelessness, typically nonprofit social service organizations, and those that have available housing in thriving communities, private landlords. Lotus Campaign is the bridge between these two sectors, and through this model, we open new doors to housing that would have never been made available to unhoused individuals and families.



# Our Partners

## GINKGO RESIDENTIAL



It all started with Ginkgo Residential taking a chance on a crazy, bold idea. Ginkgo was Lotus Campaign's first landlord partner and now its largest. In the past four and a half years, more than 60 residents participating in our program have renewed a lease at a Ginkgo property, with some renewing two or three times. When blazing a trail, it is critical to have industry leaders who are willing to break the status quo. Ginkgo paved the way for six others in the real estate sector to see and understand how the Lotus model removes the risk of renting to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. This partnership is one of the ways they remain true to their motto, "Live. Grow. Thrive."

**"Coming into it, I was really skeptical due to the nature of the business and what types of issues I thought the residents might bring. But this has been a reminder that everyone at some point will need a little help and a good environment to live."**

- **Jayme Johnson**, Regional Property Manager at Ginkgo Residential

## GRUBB PROPERTIES



Grubb Properties is Lotus Campaign's newest landlord partner. Housing its first Lotus-sponsored family in 2022, the company was compelled by other case studies Lotus Campaign brought to the table and its track record of success. Grubb specializes in communities centrally located to urban areas of Charlotte, with significant residential amenities and proximity to public transportation and major employers. This intention makes them a particularly aligned partner. We know the type of community amenities offered makes a dramatic difference as someone rebuilds their lives holistically after experiencing homelessness. This partnership is poised to flourish. In the coming years, Grubb has offered access to seven additional apartments, which would house at least 12 individuals.

**"Everyone deserves a good place to live, and at Grubb Properties we are focused on finding solutions to the nationwide housing crisis. We are proud to participate with the Lotus Campaign in this program that will benefit both the new residents and our communities."**

- **Clay Grubb**, CEO of Grubb Properties

## ASCENT HOUSING



Ascent Housing, a platform of Ascent Real Estate Capital, is another new landlord. For the past four years, Ascent has specialized in what's referred to as "Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH)." These are residential rental properties with rents lower than the traditional housing market but unsubsidized by any federal program. While the most common form of affordable housing, they are the most at risk of market shifts. Ethridge and his team are fierce advocates for the preservation of NOAH properties through a variety of partnerships. Lotus is proud to have the opportunity to house its participants in four Ascent properties this coming year.

**"Partnering with Lotus Campaign and the Landlord Participation Program was a natural fit for Ascent Housing with our focus on naturally occurring affordable housing. Lotus Campaign makes it easy for landlords to say yes to trying something new in a way that makes sense. We are excited for Lotus sponsored residents to call our properties home."**

- **Mark Ethridge**, Partner at Ascent Real Estate Capital

# A Fresh Start



**W**alking down the long hallway of a brand-new apartment complex in Charlotte, you can see the door belonging to Melina, a 48-year-old mother of four.

It's one of the only ones with a welcome mat reading "Home Sweet Home." Her case worker gave it to her the day she moved in. There's not a scuff on the walls. It's got the unmistakable smell of fresh paint and new carpet. Frankly, it's a beautiful place to call home – and Melina, who was recently homeless, is especially proud to do so.

She's beaming as she unlocks the door and floats between her favorite parts of her home – deep cabinets for pots, pans, and a crock pot, bar stools, and a balcony where the morning sun is pouring in. Behind a closed door, she reveals one of her favorite amenities – a stacked washer and dryer. It's a fresh start – and a foundation.

Melina found herself unhoused after a divorce and raising four kids alone took their toll. As the older kids gained independence, she faced more financial burden than she could carry alone.

"It started taking a downward spiral," said Melina. "It was just me raising kids."

Family members helped on occasion, but she was days away from sleeping in her car when accepted into a Charlotte Family Housing shelter late last year.

"That's when happiness started," she said. "Bricks just fell away."

They would continue to fall away.

Fewer than 90 days after entering the shelter and two weeks before Christmas, Melina qualified for Lotus Campaign's Landlord Participation Program. It's a first-of-its-kind collaboration between social service organizations and willing landlords. In this case, that's Charlotte Family Housing and Grubb Properties. The goal is to bring together those who need housing with those who have available units by removing insurmountable barriers.

By guaranteeing rent and providing economic incentives to help offset credit checks and rental histories, Lotus removes the risk for landlords to rent to people with histories like Melina's. What's more: Intentional characteristics built into the model make it more likely that participants will break the often-unrelenting cycle of homelessness.

Lotus partners with landlords who have properties in zip codes featuring well-resourced schools, access to public transportation, jobs, and at least one grocery store within a mile radius. Participants also have a case manager providing ongoing resources and support. These components have made it possible for nearly 400 program participants to not just remain housed but to rebuild their lives holistically.

It's what Melina has been doing. She currently works for Door Dash, which her centrally located apartment allows to be lucrative.

She's considering getting back into cosmetology – something she did for more than a decade.

On the road to rebuilding, there have been plenty of firsts. This was the first time she signed a lease on her own.

"That was so exciting," said Melina. "Now it's really just me, signing just my name. That's powerful."

Her 15-year-old teenage daughter – who is transgender – has her own room and bathroom for the first time in her life.

And they have a support system.

Melina's case manager Marissa is in close connection to ensure she has what's needed to continue to thrive. Sometimes that support comes in the form of coordinating the donation of a piece of furniture. Other times it's a workshop on financial literacy. And there are many simple phone calls.

"She's so resilient and hard working," said Marissa. "I'm thrilled to be a part of this journey with her."

Some days, Melina still can't believe it. "Are you all setting me up?" she laughs. "I'm waiting for the setup. This is too good to be true."

But even if she doesn't always believe it to be true, she knows she's worthy – as are others who are experiencing what she did.

"Don't just say I'll just give up," said Melina.

**“ YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE IN YOURSELF FIRST AND THEN EVERYONE ELSE WILL BELIEVE IN YOU. IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'RE LESS OF A PERSON BECAUSE YOU'RE HOMELESS. ”**



Melina and Case Manager Marissa

# Peace & Quiet



**M**ario's apartment is at the back of a well-manicured apartment complex, owned by Ginkgo Properties, on the East side of Charlotte.

It's warm for early February. A bus lets out a rider at the property entrance. A man carries a child and birthday balloon to a car. It is peaceful and quiet in the complex – something Mario mentions often.

As we round a hill, Mario's already waiting outside. He's still in his uniform after having completed a shift as a truck driver – the job he's had for the last two years. After a quick handshake, we're hurriedly off to the already open door of his home – the first he considers his own at 45.

Mario is one of Lotus Campaign's Landlord Participation Program participants. He's lived here for nine months, a joyful reality made possible by Lotus and its partners but uncharacteristic for those with similar histories.

Mario has been to prison for robbery and other charges. "Between 16 and 27, I spent more time in than out," he said.

His drug addiction started at 13, and before last year, he was homeless.

"Once I learned the true definition of homeless, I realized I've experienced it my whole adult life," he said. "There was a time or two I had an apartment in my own name, but that was for maybe a total of a year."

These tough and intimate details of a person's life, while symptoms of broken systems, are obstacles when applying for housing. But without a home, rebuilding other parts of a life is nearly impossible.

"It's hopelessness," said Mario. "You have no idea where you're going to stay – whether you're going to be cold, warm, whether you'll have food, or peace of mind. It's constant change. You can't focus on anything but day to day and what you'll do in the next couple hours. You can't live for tomorrow."

For nearly five years, Lotus Campaign has removed the risk for landlords to rent to people like Mario. Using private capital, Lotus guarantees rent and other securities on market-rate units to offset credit checks and rental histories for people experiencing homelessness. All program participants also receive ongoing coaching from our social service partners, ensuring that they develop the necessary skills to stay healthy and housed. Landlords make no financial concessions and previously homeless people move into unstigmatized housing and thriving communities in a matter of days.

"If I would have thought about this three years ago, I wouldn't have thought it was possible," said Mario.

The television is on in Mario's home. It's toasty warm. Something is cooking. There's word art on nearly every wall. A poem titled "Don't Quit" is in the living room. "Home" hangs above a glass dining table. A line about faith is in the kitchen.

There's a sectional he tells us is the first piece of furniture he's ever picked out himself. Steam is rising from a pot – rice and lima beans. "I'm trying to eat healthier but that's a job in and of itself," he says, smiling.

When asked what he loves most about his new home, he mentions the couch and the stove nearly immediately. After a pause he adds, "And my flowers." "I try to keep them alive – maybe not to the best of my ability, but they are still living," he said.

A picture of a woman sits below the leggy vine – his late wife who died from drug use last year.

"She was the love of my life," he said. "She left Charlotte and 15 days later she was gone. She was instrumental in getting me into recovery and made sure I got to detox."

Her help mattered. Despite immense loss and trauma, Mario's still sober – three years now.

While he's housed in the Lotus program, he continues to receive ongoing support through Hope Haven, a local addiction recovery organization. This lasting support provided to all program participants has proven to be instrumental in keeping them housed – so much so that nearly 98% of the residents we house graduate from their programs and go on to support themselves.

Mario can envision that for himself – and more.

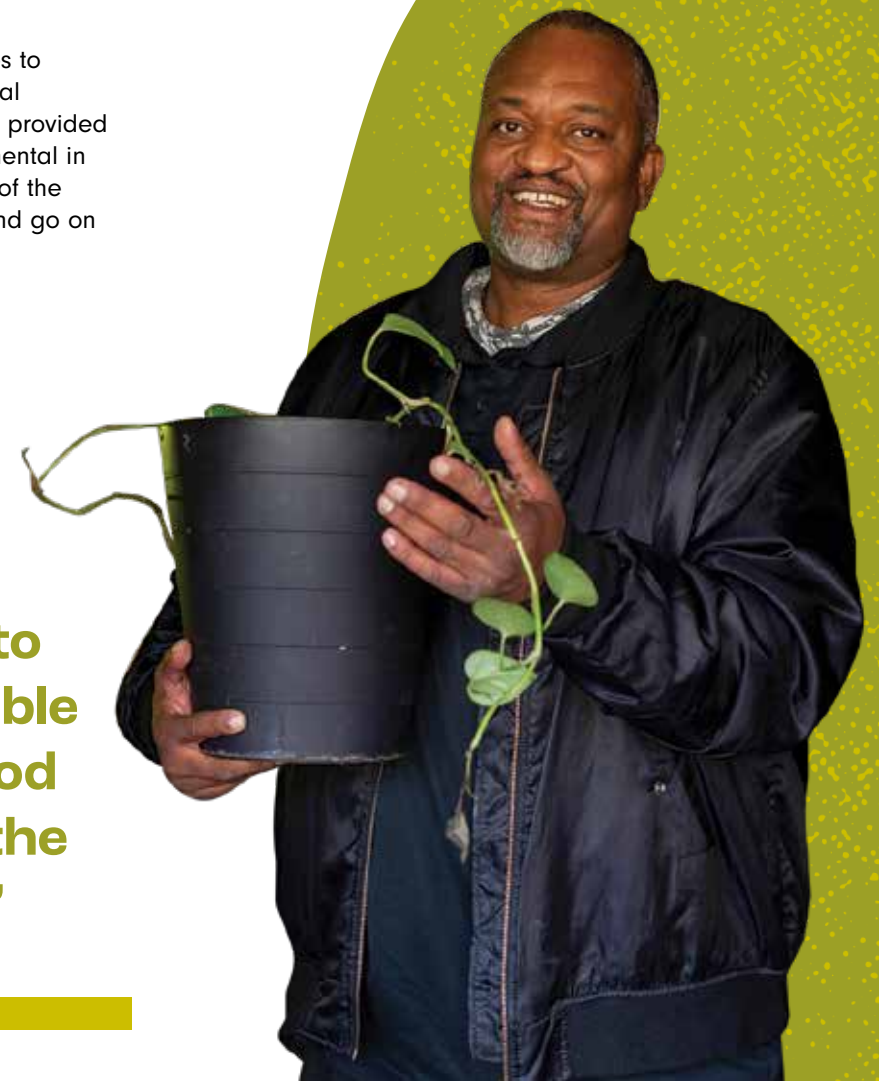
"My life has changed tremendously," he said.

**"I can now work on my goals. I want to be a homeowner one day. Now my kids are able to come visit. I have a stable place to stay. I have food to cook. I can turn on the AC. It's peace of mind."**

He says goodbye and walks back through the door to his home. At the base of the doorframe, a rock sits with the word gratitude painted on it.

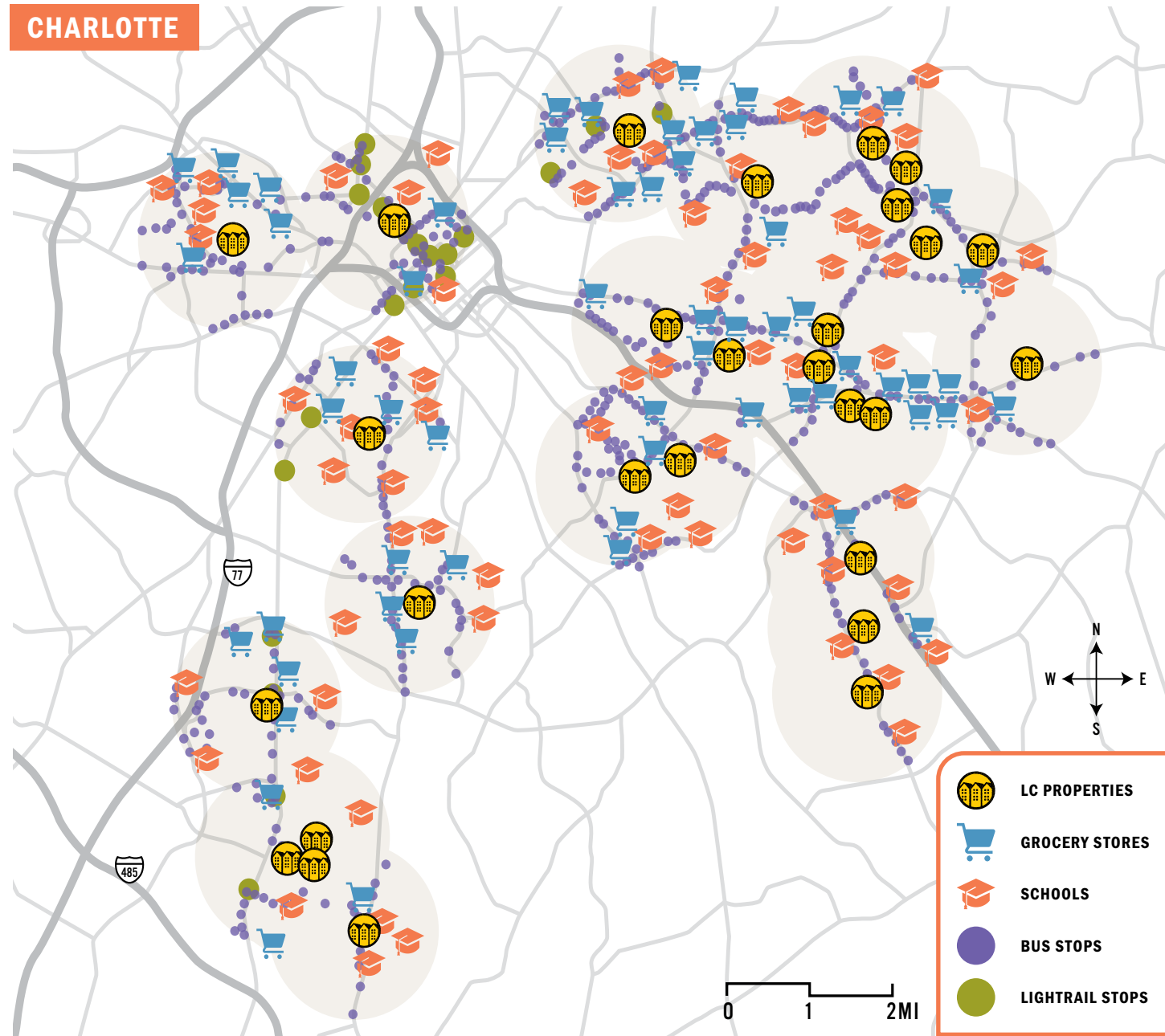
He turns around to reiterate an offer to share his story with others.

"I can't thank Lotus enough for what they do," he says one last time. "Let me know if there's anything I can do."



# Neighborhoods of Opportunity

CHARLOTTE



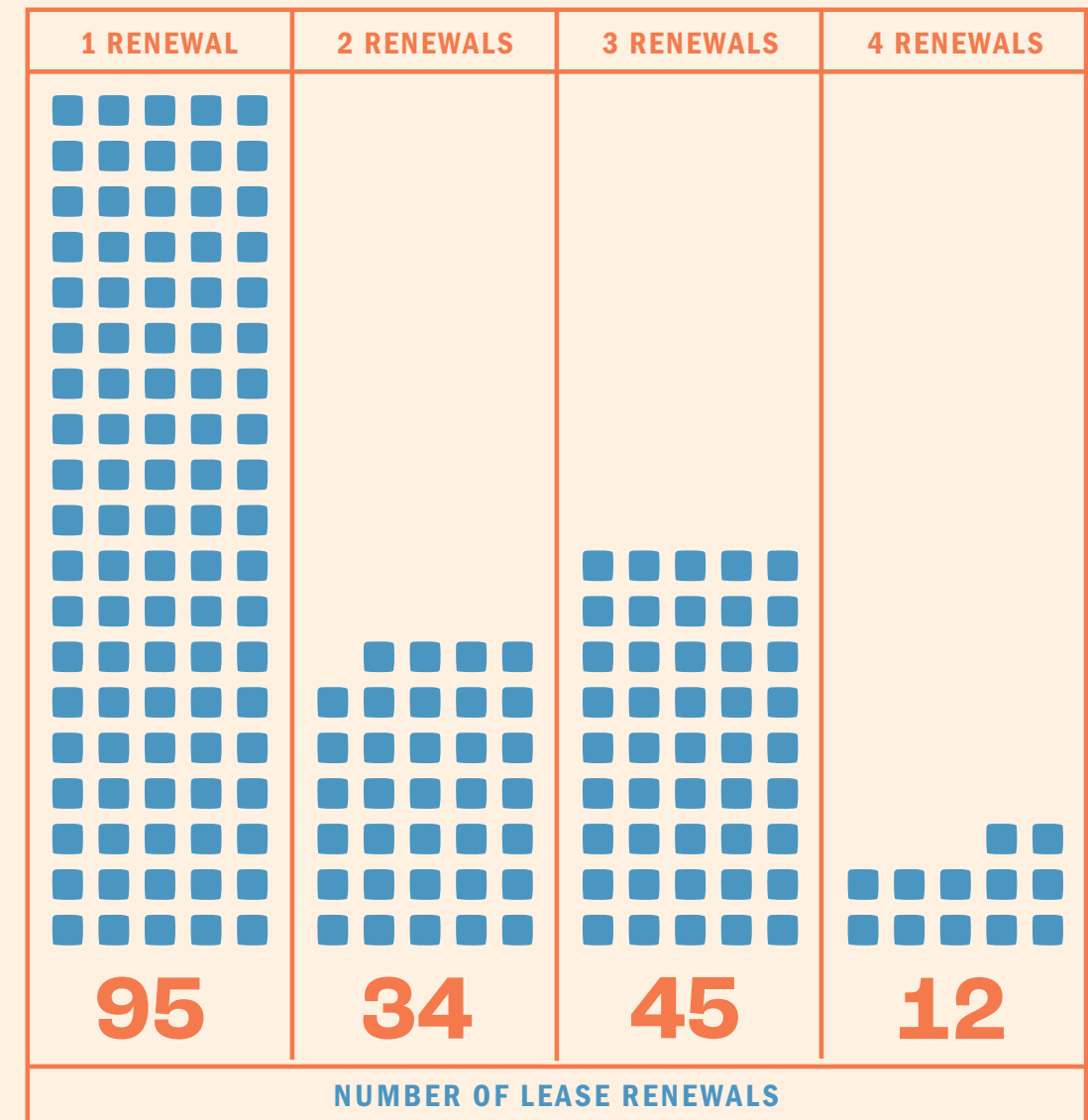
**Not every roof is created equal.** That's why Lotus Campaign is intentional with where it facilitates housing. It is a key differentiator of our model that understands solving homelessness must be holistic. The housing that those who have recently been homeless can afford – either on their own or with some assistance – is often in already marginalized communities with high levels of poverty.

This presents additional barriers as individuals attempt to rebuild their lives and increases the likelihood they remain in the cycle of homelessness. In contrast, Lotus partners with landlords with communities close to public transportation, schools, major employers, and grocery stores. The importance of the proximity of these elements cannot be overstated.

# A Lasting Difference

**THE LONGER AN INDIVIDUAL STAYS IN HOUSING THE LESS LIKELY THEY ARE TO END UP UNHOUSED AGAIN. THAT'S WHY SOLVING HOMELESSNESS REQUIRES RENEWALS.**

Renewals are an indicator of success and another step on participants' journeys to self-sufficiency. Our participants are continuing to put down roots in their communities when they renew. The ongoing support facilitated through our social service partners is working, and they need the continued support of Lotus Campaign. To date, Lotus has supported 186 lease renewals with some residents renewing up to four times through the Landlord Participation Program. Lotus commits to continuing to support residents through its program as long as they are sponsored by their nonprofit social service organization.



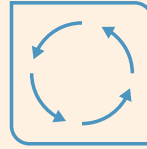
**186** TOTAL LEASE RENEWALS

# Our Impact



**380**

TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE  
HOUSED THROUGH OUR PROGRAM



**186**

TOTAL NUMBER OF  
LEASE RENEWALS



**566**

PEOPLE YEARS - THE TOTAL  
NUMBER OF YEARS LOTUS  
RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN  
STABLY HOUSED



**7.3** days

FAMILIES LEAVE THE SHELTER  
AND ENTER HOUSING ONE WEEK  
FASTER WITH LOTUS SUPPORT



**\$906**

AVERAGE ANNUAL COST FOR  
LOTUS TO PLACE AND KEEP  
SOMEONE IN HOUSING  
FOR 1 YEAR



**32**

TOTAL NUMBER OF  
LOTUS PARTNERS

7 PARTICIPATING LANDLORDS

4 NONPROFIT PARTNERS

11 CORPORATE SPONSORS

10 FOUNDATIONS



**274**

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESIDENTS  
WHO HAVE MOVED ON TO  
INDEPENDENT HOUSING

## Thank you.

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE NEARLY 200 SUPPORTERS WHO JOINED US IN MAKING THIS IMPACT POSSIBLE. FOUNDATION AND CORPORATE SUPPORT ALSO CONTINUED TO GROW, AND WE ESPECIALLY WANT TO THANK THE FOLLOWING:

A.J. Fletcher Foundation • Atrium Health • Avanath Capital Management, LLC • Bank of America  
Banyan Street Real Estate • The David Belk Cannon Foundation • Crosland Foundation •  
Ginkgo Residential, LLC • LISC Charlotte • The Roddenberry Foundation • Truist • Wells Fargo

## LOTUS CAMPAIGN

LOTUSCAMPAIGN.ORG

info@lotuscampaign.org

(704) 324 - 3330



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