



# **A Community First Plan to Address Homelessness, Mental Health, Addiction & Housing Instability in District 8 & Orange County**

## **Protecting Residents, Preserving Stability & Building Responsible Growth Throughout Orange County**

---

My name is Isaiah, and when I look across District 8 and Orange County as a whole, I do not just see growth. I see pressure building underneath it. I see working families fighting to stay in the communities they helped build. I see veterans struggling silently after serving our country. I see addiction and untreated mental health issues pushing residents further into instability while housing prices continue rising faster than wages throughout Lake Nona, Meadow Woods, Southchase, Hunters Creek, Moss Park, Sawgrass, and Wyndham Lakes. Homelessness today does not always look the way people expect it to. It can look like a single mother living week to week in a hotel room. It can look like a veteran sleeping in their vehicle. It can look like a young adult couch surfing while battling depression. It can look like a family doubling up with relatives because rent increased again while

paychecks stayed the same. The truth is that Orange County is growing rapidly, but if we fail to intentionally protect the people already living here, then growth eventually becomes displacement. This proposal is not anti development. It is pro accountability, pro affordability, and pro community stability. Growth should strengthen neighborhoods instead of pushing residents out of them.

*“The strength of Orange County should not be measured solely by how fast we grow. It should be measured by whether the people who built these communities can still afford to live in them with dignity, safety, stability, and opportunity.”*

## **The Housing Affordability Crisis**

---

Across District 8, rising rent costs, insurance premiums, HOA fees, and property taxes are placing extraordinary pressure on working families. Teachers, airport employees, hospitality workers, healthcare staff, veterans, and first responders are increasingly unable to afford living near the communities they serve. Communities such as Meadow Woods and Southchase continue facing affordability pressure while nearby luxury expansion throughout Southeast Orange County accelerates. The result is slow displacement. Families are being pushed further away from jobs, schools, transportation corridors, and healthcare resources. Seniors living on fixed incomes fear being taxed out of neighborhoods they spent decades helping build. Young adults raised in Orange County increasingly cannot afford to remain in the same communities where they grew up. This issue becomes even more severe when unexpected emergencies occur. One medical issue, one job loss, or one financial setback can quickly place families into housing instability or homelessness. Preventing homelessness must begin long before someone reaches the street.

## **Mental Health & Addiction Challenges**

---

Mental health and addiction issues throughout Orange County continue growing while access to affordable treatment remains inconsistent. Too often, residents only receive help after a crisis already occurs through hospitalization, incarceration, overdose, eviction, or domestic violence intervention. Veterans struggling with PTSD, youth facing anxiety and depression, and individuals recovering from addiction deserve systems focused on prevention instead of reaction. Addiction itself is deeply connected to trauma, poverty, mental illness, and housing instability. Criminalizing addiction without addressing its root causes creates a revolving cycle between emergency rooms, county jails, temporary shelters, and unsafe environments. District 8 deserves a coordinated community based approach that restores dignity while providing long term stabilization rather than temporary survival.

## **Current Efforts Already Helping Orange County**

---

Orange County already has organizations working tirelessly to address homelessness, mental health access, veteran assistance, and addiction recovery. The Homeless Services Network of Central Florida continues coordinating outreach and housing services throughout the region. Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida provides emergency shelter and stabilization programs. Aspire Health Partners continues expanding behavioral health and addiction treatment access. Heart of Florida United Way supports crisis response and housing assistance initiatives throughout Central Florida. Orange County itself has also invested in behavioral health partnerships, social services, transportation planning, and affordability discussions. The challenge is not a lack of effort. The challenge is scale, coordination, accessibility, long term sustainability, and ensuring these services actually reach the communities experiencing the greatest pressure.

## **My Community First Solution**

---

My vision begins with establishing Community Stability Housing Zones throughout Meadow Woods, Southchase, Hunters Creek, Sawgrass, Wyndham Lakes, and surrounding high growth areas. These zones would prioritize workforce housing, preserve starter homes, protect longtime residents from displacement pressure, and require developers receiving county incentives to contribute affordable housing tied directly to local income levels rather than luxury market pricing. I also believe Orange County should aggressively pursue adaptive reuse projects by converting underused hotels, vacant plazas, and commercial spaces into transitional housing, supportive housing communities, and affordable residential developments. Growth should carry responsibility. If private development benefits from public infrastructure expansion, then private development should also help protect affordability and community stability. My plan also includes Veterans and Family Recovery Villages throughout Orange County that combine temporary housing, addiction recovery services, PTSD treatment, job placement assistance, workforce training, childcare support, transportation assistance, and long term mental health care under one coordinated system. Veterans should receive immediate stabilization, peer mentorship, housing placement assistance, and workforce reintegration support after serving our country. In addition, I want Neighborhood Mental Health & Crisis Response Teams deployed directly into local communities through schools, churches, parks, libraries, and community centers. Residents should not have to wait until crisis points to receive mental health care. Preventative support systems are more humane, more effective, and far less expensive than relying entirely on emergency response systems after crises already occur.

## **Long Term Vision For District 8**

---

I believe District 8 can become a model for what responsible growth truly looks like throughout Florida. Not growth that prioritizes luxury over people. Not development that ignores affordability. Not policies that criminalize addiction while neglecting mental

health. But growth that protects residents, strengthens neighborhoods, supports veterans, expands affordability, and invests in prevention instead of punishment. Communities like Lake Nona, Meadow Woods, Southchase, Hunters Creek, Moss Park, Sawgrass, and Wyndham Lakes deserve the opportunity to grow together instead of becoming divided by economic class and displacement pressure. Orange County has an opportunity to prove that economic growth and community stability do not have to exist in opposition to each other. The future of Orange County should belong not only to outside investors or luxury expansion interests, but also to the working families, veterans, seniors, young adults, and longtime residents who built these communities and continue holding them together every single day.

## **Sources & Referenced Materials**

- Orange County Housing & Community Development Reports
- Orange County Behavioral Health & Social Service Initiatives
- Homeless Services Network of Central Florida
- Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida
- Aspire Health Partners Behavioral Health Programs
- Heart of Florida United Way Housing & Crisis Assistance Programs
- Florida Housing Affordability & Homelessness Research
- Regional Workforce Housing & Transportation Planning Discussions
- Central Florida Population Growth & Infrastructure Data