



Housing Justice for Young People Aging out of Foster Care in New York City

A Roadmap, Developed by System-Impacted Youth, to Create Safe, High-Quality, Integrated Housing in Desirable Neighborhoods for All Youth Exiting Foster Care

The Center For
FAIRFUTURES >

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village



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HR&A

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“Young people are suffering to navigate housing after enduring foster care.

Without a home, we can't feel free. We can't feel control. We can't feel secure. We can't feel stable. And we can't elevate in the ways we would like.”

- **Christine Joseph**, Fair Futures Housing Design Fellow and foster youth leader

This report was developed by the **Center for Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board**, which includes 17 young adults impacted by the child welfare system in New York City. We are dedicated to advocating for New York City's foster youth, so they have the necessary support they deserve. We engaged six **Fair Futures Housing Design Fellows**, pictured below, whose direct experience and expertise shaped the analysis and recommendations in this report.

Fair Futures Housing Design Fellows



➤ *Cheyenne Deopersaud*



➤ *Grace Tatom*



➤ *Christine Joseph*



➤ *Sarah Slater*



➤ *Dylan Tatom*



➤ *T'Coy Adams*

THE ROADMAP TO JUST HOUSING FOR FOSTER YOUTH

Thrust into New York City's impossibly tight housing market, youth in and exiting foster care face extreme housing precarity and too often - homelessness.

National research [has found](#) that 31 to 46 percent of transition-aged foster youth had experienced homelessness at least once before they turned 26. In New York City, of the 429 youth who aged out of foster care in 2023, 31% had to stay in a foster or group home because they simply had no other housing options. And while the remaining 69% were afforded housing, their options left them in neighborhoods saddled with the legacy of redlining, where they faced rodents in their apartments and have reported feeling unsafe alone.

This plainly unacceptable foster care to homelessness and housing insecurity pipeline persists despite successive waves of federal, state and local investments in rental subsidies and services for these deserving young people. Dismantling this pipeline is not a function of a lack of public will or funding, but rather a hitherto missed opportunity to create a comprehensive housing solution for NYC's foster youth that builds on local government's strengths while drawing in private capital.

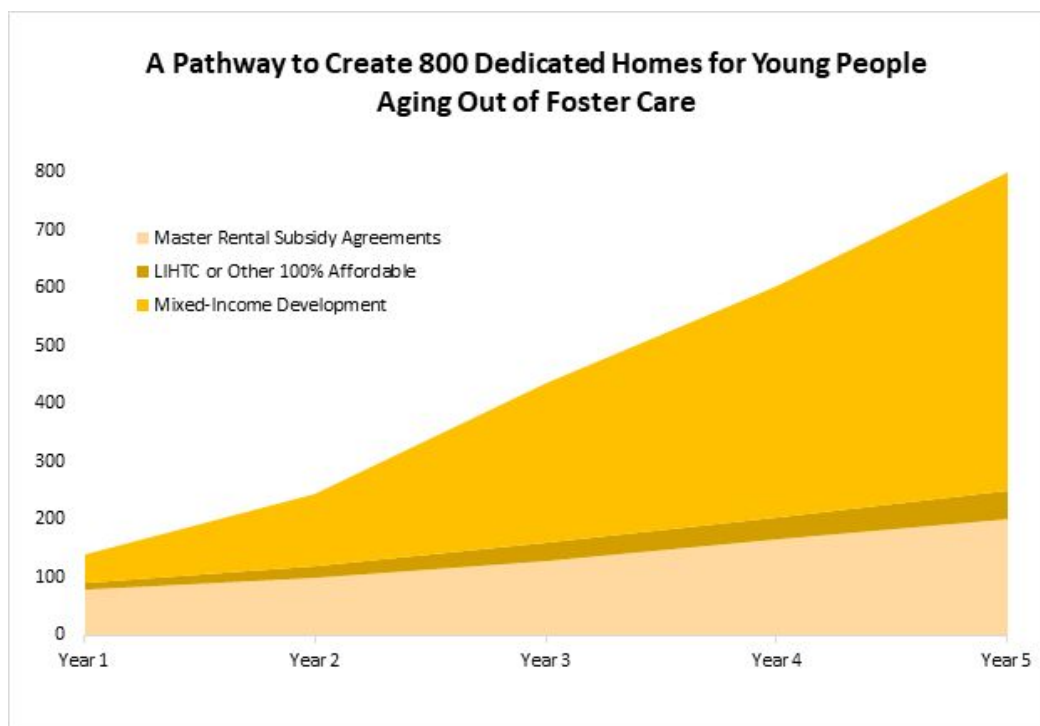
In 2024, The Center for Fair Futures and its Youth Advisory Board, comprised of 17 young people who have been impacted by foster care, set out on an ambitious effort to ensure all foster youth aging out of New York City's foster care system were not only afforded with housing, but the kind of housing that could put them on a path to independence and success.

Buoyed by a 2023 advocacy win that brought more than \$30 million in ongoing annual funding to ensure all NYC foster youth ages 14 to 26 have one-on-one coaching to help them navigate education and career opportunities, Fair Futures enlisted three mission driven partners to help create a comprehensive housing solution for all NYC foster youth.

The following report – produced by Fair Futures, The Children's Village, HR&A Advisors and Good River Partners – outlines a five year vision that promises to provide 800 new homes for youth exiting foster care.

The strategy outlined in the pages below is grounded in youth voice. In 2024, the partners created a Fair Futures Housing Design Fellowship, in which six youth leaders who have themselves struggled to find housing after leaving foster care, defined the quality standards that all housing for young people aging out of care should meet.

With that definition of just housing in hand, HR&A Advisors, one of the nation's preeminent real estate development and public policy consulting firms, modeled six housing typologies weighing public rental subsidies against private investments and public sources of capital. **Their research finds that through a mixture of master rental subsidy agreements, mission-driven affordable housing projects, and accelerated construction on new mixed-income projects, there is a viable pathway to set aside - over five years - 800 homes for youth exiting the system.**



Considering the rate at which foster youth housing is currently brought online in New York City, it could take 30 years to create the 800 homes needed, meaning the City will miss entire generations of young people aging out of care who need this assistance now.

To not let that happen, the authors of this report, including young people impacted by the child welfare system, have laid out a clear strategy encompassing policy recommendations, cross-sector collaboration, and the creation of a privately financed Fair Futures Housing Fund. The financial analysis in this report highlights a path to leverage market-rate development, creating mixed-income projects that secure dedicated homes for youth aging out of care. To fund these projects, HR&A modeled three opportunities to blend traditional, market-driven private investment with mission-motivated capital, generating up to 50 dedicated homes per project with modest returns of up to 4% for mission-aligned funders. These projects can be even more cost effective when combined with moderate public subsidy, generating returns of up to 6% and decreasing the philanthropic contribution needed from an average of \$257,000 per dedicated home to just \$135,000 per home. By matching the public systems change with private financing, New York City can and will prevent its foster youth from joining the ranks of the unhoused and give them the fair future they are demanding and deserve.

This report outlines ten steps the City of New York, the State, housing developers and operators, and philanthropy should take in 2025 to:

- Adopt crucial policy changes to take full advantage of every available tool and federal dollar to address the unmet housing needs of young people aging out of care.
- Better leverage existing housing stock in New York City to meet the needs and desires of young people aging out of foster care, according to the fellows' our quality standards.
- Design a Fair Futures Housing Fund, a new dedicated source of capital that will accelerate the development of housing that adheres to the quality standards developed by the Fair Futures Housing Design Fellows.

Each of these recommendations, and the research to support them, are detailed in the following pages.

If we follow these steps in 2025, we believe we can create 800 dedicated homes for young people aging out of foster care over the next five years. If we do not act with urgency and focus, young people will continue to wait for the housing they need and deserve.

Special thanks to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation for supporting this effort.

TEN RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

Action	Actors
Seed a Fair Futures Housing Fund to accelerate the development of roughly 600 new homes that adhere to the quality standards developed by our Housing Design Fellows.	<i>Philanthropy</i> <i>impact investment</i> <i>community</i>
Scale and expand the use of master rental subsidy agreements , to connect at least 200 young people aging out of foster care with quality apartments, and so master rental subsidy agreements can be relied upon by property owners and developers as a guaranteed revenue source that can be leveraged for additional public or private financing.	<i>Administration for Children's Services</i> <i>Philanthropy</i>
Do not assume – in policy or practice decisions – that all young people exiting foster care require supportive housing. While some young people may require the intensive supportive housing model, the research conducted for this project suggests that most young people want and need a less service-rich option: quality housing in a desirable neighborhood.	<i>New York City</i> <i>New York State</i> <i>Philanthropy</i>
Increase the City's drawdown of federal Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers. As recently as 2021, NYCHA has not received a competitive FYI award , limiting the resources available to youth aging out of care. NYCHA should increase their use of FYI vouchers from a case-by-case basis to every voucher possible.	<i>New York City Housing Authority</i>
Create a centralized hub to offer continuous support and remove barriers to housing for young people aging out of care. The hub will ensure that all young people have access to a consistent, high-level of housing navigation assistance and provide ongoing support and training for housing navigation specialists embedded within each child welfare organization.	<i>Administration for Children's Services</i>

Action	Actors
<p>Make city vouchers transferable and portable to nearby states to help young people access available, quality, affordable homes in nearby states.</p>	<p><i>City of New York</i></p>
<p>Automatically seek permanent vouchers for all young people aging out of foster care. The City should, as a matter of policy, convert young people's CityFHEPS vouchers and FYI vouchers into permanent Housing Choice Vouchers.</p>	<p><i>Administration for Children's Services</i> <i>City Council</i></p>
<p>Hold young people's rent at low and predictable rates in the first five years after they age out of foster care. Many of the young people engaged in creating this report shared that they were surprised and frustrated when their monthly rent increased sharply after they were able to secure a job. The City should make it possible for young people aging out of care to pay a low and predictable rent for their first five years so they can build momentum in their career and savings for their future.</p>	<p><i>City Council</i></p>
<p>Continue to increase New York State's reimbursement rate for supervised setting programs (SSPs) to maximize federal matching dollars. SSPs are transitional homes for youth aging out of care, including individual apartments, college housing, or a 'supervised independent living program' (SILP) which are run by nonprofits. SSP reimbursement rates are currently around \$4,800 per month in New York and are set annually by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. The State should continue to increase reimbursement rates to ensure maximum Federal dollars to support youth aging out of care.</p>	<p><i>New York State</i></p>
<p>Advocate for federal legislation that will eliminate unnecessary barriers to housing for young people aging out of foster care, such as tying a young person's eligibility for services to the income of their often-estranged parents or legal guardians, unlocking access to support for more young people aging out of care.</p>	<p><i>New York City</i> <i>New York State</i></p>