



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 ➤

the children's
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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 2022, 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.

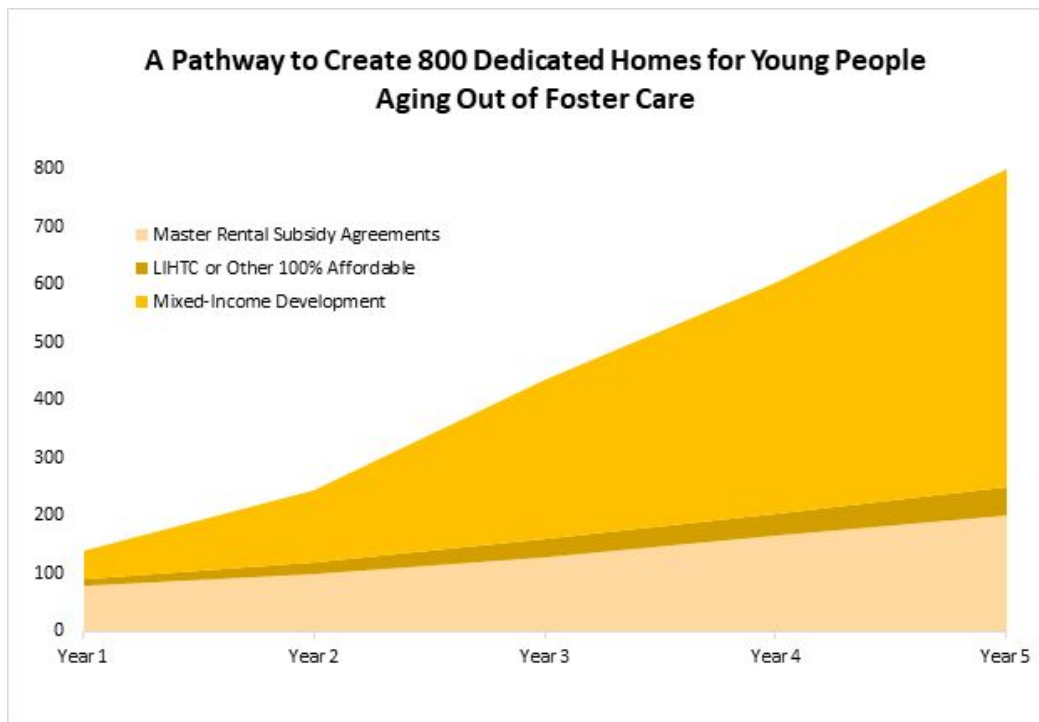
In 2024, The Center for Fair Futures and its Youth Advisory Board, comprised of 17 young people who have been impacted by foster care, set out on an ambitious effort to ensure all foster youth aging out of New York City's foster care system were not only afforded with housing, but the kind of housing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

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