



HOMELESSNESS IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

OXFORD MAP THE SYSTEM 2021 | SOCIAL RESET

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UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

CORPORATIONS

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS, COMMERCIAL
BUSINESS(ES), DOWNTOWN OFFICES

GOVERNMENT

UTAH STATE, UTAH LEGISLATURE,
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SALT LAKE CITY

MORMON CHURCH

RELIGION FOR HALF OF ALL UTAHNS, LARGEST LANDHOLDER
IN SALT LAKE CITY, \$100B ENDOWMENT (MORE THAN
DOUBLE THAT OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH)

HEALTHCARE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, HOSPITALS,
REHABILITATION CENTERS

CHARITABLE NONPROFITS

RESOURCE CENTERS, THE ROAD HOME,
SHELTER THE HOMELESS, VOLUNTEERS OF
AMERICA, CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES,
CROSSROADS URBAN CENTER

LAW ENFORCEMENT

SALT LAKE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT,
“LAW AND ORDER” POLITICIANS

SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISTS

TAKE SHELTER COALITION, PIONEER
PARK COALITION, COMMUNITY
ACTION SERVICES & FOOD BANK,
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

THE HOUSED

RENTERS, HOME OWNERS

SCHOLARS & RESEARCHERS

SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, ACADEMICS,
DATA COLLECTORS

THE UNHOUSED



- SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- NIMBYISM
- CRIMINALIZATION & INCARCERATION
- EVICCTIONS
- UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING

- MENTAL ILLNESS
- STIGMA AGAINST HOMELESSNESS, MENTAL ILLNESS,
DRUG ADDICTION, LGBTQ+
- LACK OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

DIRECTION OF POWER & INFLUENCE

"THEY TORE DOWN THE ONE SHELTER THAT PRETTY MUCH HOUSED EVERYTHING. IF THEY HAD LEFT THAT UP AND THEN BUILT A COUPLE MORE WE WOULD HAVE HAD SOMETHING."

"PEOPLE SWARMING DOWN ON US BECAUSE THEY DON'T LIKE THE NEGATIVITY OF THE HOMELESSNESS. WELL, THERE'S A LOT OF PEOPLE OUT HERE THAT NEED HELP, SO HELP THOSE PEOPLE INSTEAD OF HURTING THEM."

"YOU STRUGGLE FOR FOOD, YOU WORRY ABOUT THE COPS WHEN YOU'RE SLEEPING, YOU CAN'T REALLY SLEEP."

"I'VE GOT MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES... BIPOLAR AND GENERAL ANXIETY DISORDER AND DEPRESSION... I TRY TO PUT THEM ON THE BACK BURNER."

"THERE'S A LOT OF APARTMENTS THAT'VE GONE UP, BEEN RAISED AND OPENED, BUT NONE OF THEM ARE LOW-INCOME HOUSING...PEOPLE LIKE ME, I'M ON DISABILITY. I CAN'T AFFORD \$1,000 A MONTH."

"I'VE GOT TO STAND OUT HERE AND DO THIS SHIT JUST TO EAT."

"WE HAVE TO SUBJECT OUR CHILDREN TO SEEING DRUG USE EVERYDAY AND VIOLENCE AND POLICE AND AMBULANCES."

"WE ENDED UP HOMELESS BECAUSE OF THE BAD SITUATION [MY HUSBAND] PUT US INTO."

"I'M 30 YEARS OLD AND I CAME DOWN HERE AFTER AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP. I'M JUST OUT HERE STRUGGLING LIKE EVERYONE ELSE."

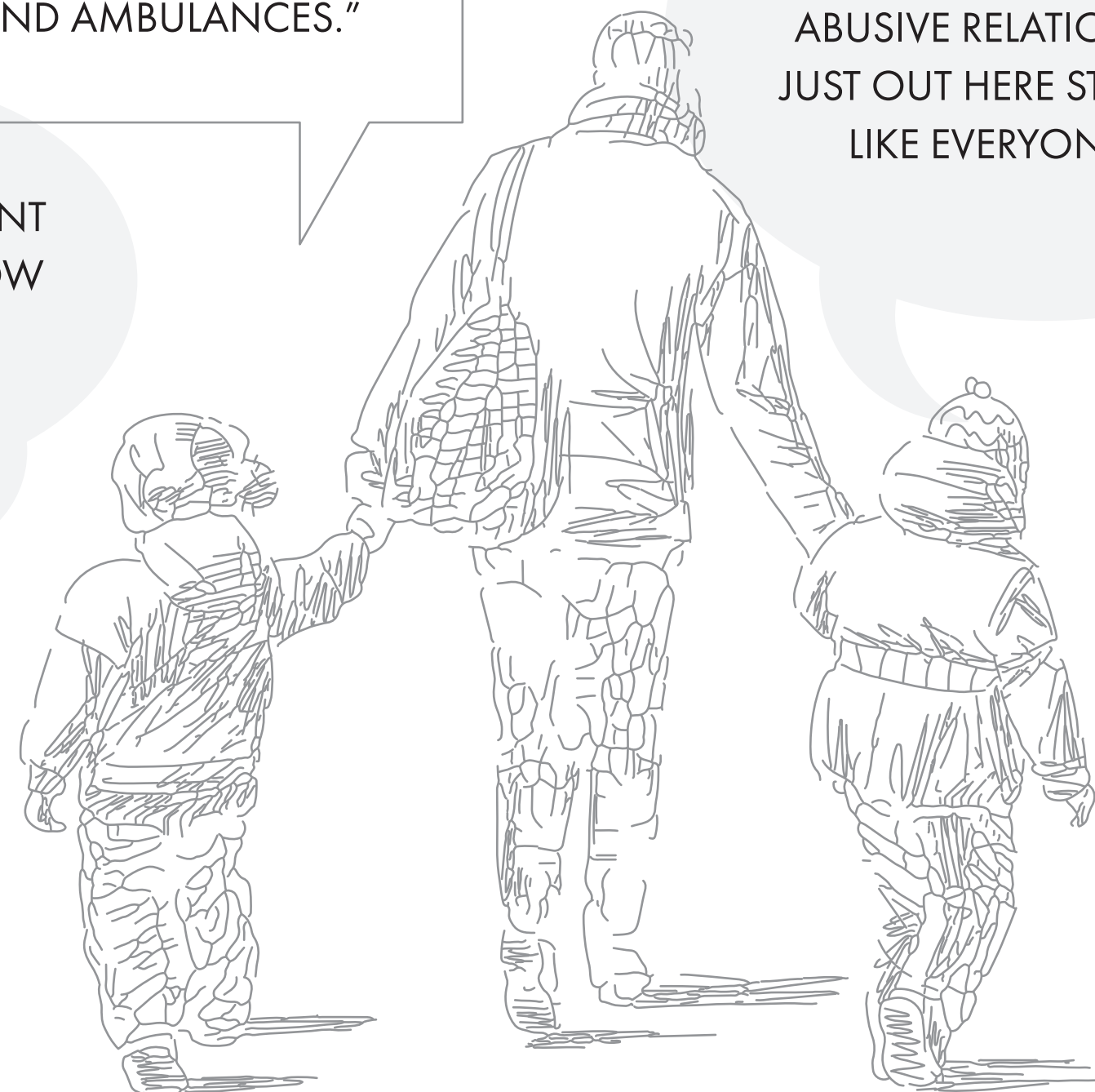
"NOT ALL OF US ARE DRUGGIES. ... WE ARE TRULY IN A ROUGH SITUATION AND IF IT WERE MY CHOICE WE WOULDN'T BE PANHANDLING. WE WOULDN'T BE HOMELESS, NO LESS. I'M DEALING WITH IT THE BEST I CAN. I'M TAKING CARE OF THREE LITTLE GIRLS THE BEST I CAN."

"I DON'T FEEL SAFE."

"WE ARE GOOD PEOPLE IN A BAD SITUATION."

"IF YOU PUT A TENT UP, THEY'LL THROW YOU IN JAIL"

"I AM A UNITED STATES MARINE. I SERVED FOR 4 YEARS. I NOW LIVE ON THE STREETS OF SALT LAKE CITY."





EVENTS

3,131 PEOPLE ARE UNHOUSED IN SLC, UT (2020)

PATTERNS

20% SUFFER CHRONIC SUBSTANCE ABUSE
13% VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
31% SEVERELY MENTALLY ILL
80% OF EVICTIONS OCCUR IN MAJORITY BIPOC REGIONS
ARRESTS OF 5,000 UNHOUSED PEOPLE IN 14 MONTHS (DURING OPERATION RIO GRANDE)
REGULAR POLICE SWEEPS OVER LAST 5 YEARS

SYSTEM STRUCTURE

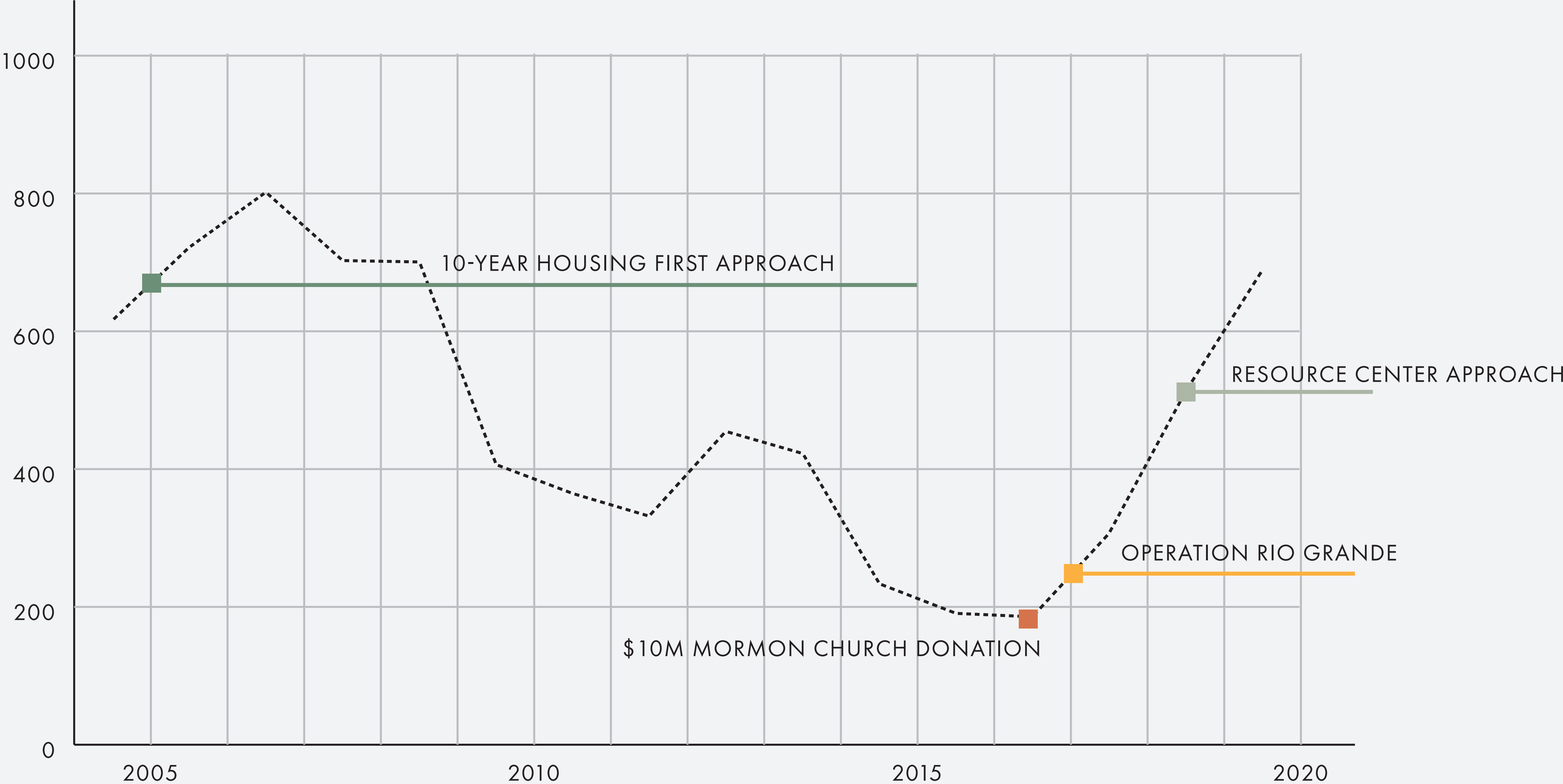
LEAST AFFORDABLE HOUSING MARKET IN USA
CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM
TENUOUS GOVERNMENTAL FUNDING
CAPITALISM
RELIGIOUS CULTURE

MENTAL MODELS

PROSPERITY GOSPEL	AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM
"LAW AND ORDER" POLITICS	BOOTSTRAP IDEOLOGY
RELIGIOUS PERFECTIONISM	CONSERVATISM
WHITE SUPREMACY	COLONIALIZATION
NOT IN MY BACKYARD (NIMBY)	

HOMELESSNESS IN SALT LAKE CITY

TIMELINE OF EVENTS & CHRONICALLY HOMELESS POPULATION GROWTH



DETAILS OF EVENTS



"HOUSING FIRST" APPROACH

2005: "HOUSING FIRST" APPROACH BEGINS

2009: LAST AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS BUILT

2015: UTAH GARNERS NATIONAL POSITIVE MEDIA
FOR "FUNCTIONAL ZERO" STATUS OF
HOMELESSNESS



DONATION

2017: MORMON CHURCH DONATES \$10 MILLION TO
SHELTER THE HOMELESS NONPROFIT TO
SUPPORT RESOURCE CENTER CONSTRUCTION



OPERATION RIO GRANDE

2017: \$67 MILLION BUDGET OF TAXPAYER MONEY
STARTS WITH 3 PHASE PLAN, NEARLY 80%
SPENT ON PUNITIVE MEASURES

2018: ACLU UTAH PUBLISHES REPORTS ABOUT
FLAWS OF OPERATION RIO GRANDE

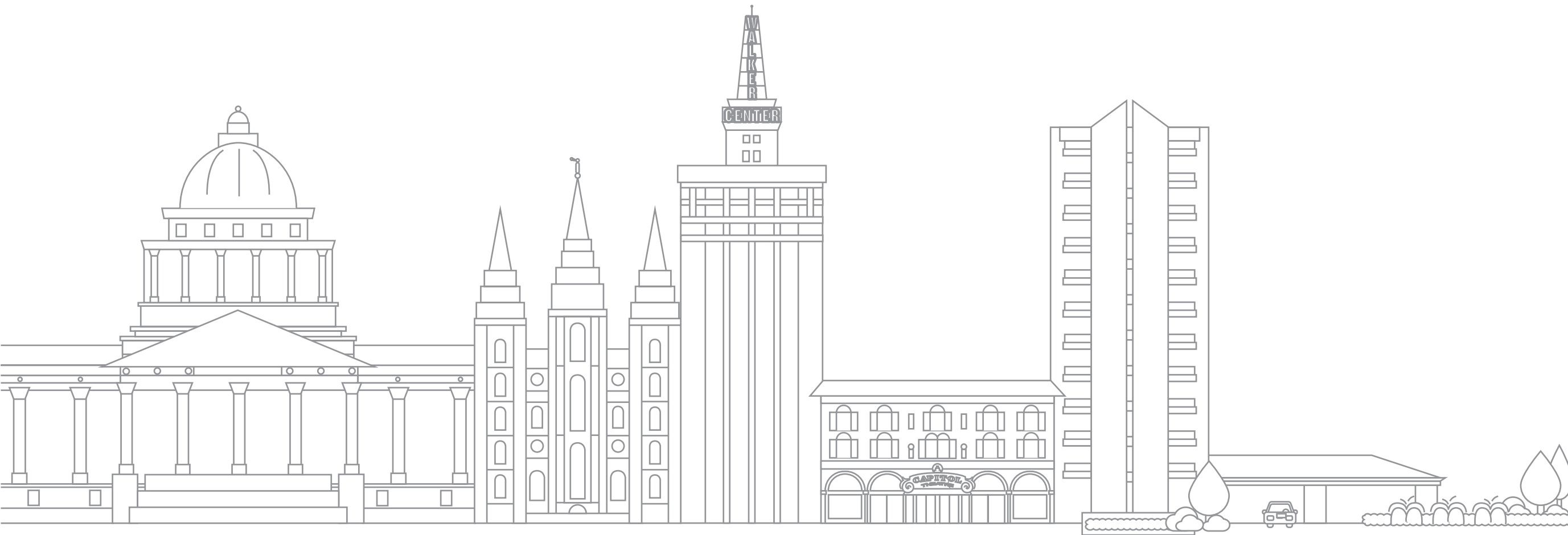


RESOURCE CENTER APPROACH

2019: RESOURCE CENTERS REPLACE SHELTERS AND
AFFORDABLE HOUSING APPROACH, DOWNTOWN
SHELTER IS PERMANENTLY CLOSED

2020: THREE RESOURCE CENTERS OPENED

2021: SWEEPS CONTINUE AND UTAH LEGISLATURE
PROPOSES \$650,000 IN POLICE FUNDING
TO DEAL WITH UNHOUSED POPULATION.
HOMELESSNESS GOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL IS
FORMED AND UTAH'S FIRST FORMAL HOMELESSNESS
COORDINATOR POSITION IS FILLED



EXISTING SOLUTIONS LANDSCAPE



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Utah took 10 years developing a “housing first approach” to shelter the unhoused. This approach all but came to a halt after stakeholders realized sustainable funding and more holistic accompanying steps would be needed to make this approach a success. Today Salt Lake has just one affordable housing unit specifically for the unhoused, called Palmer’s Court.



RESOURCE CENTERS

After failing to consistently maintain longer-term homeless shelters, or strategically plan for affordable housing units, Salt Lake has now turned to creating “resource centers” which provide short-term access to resting spots, and resources like food and water. So far, three resource shelters have been built and the “Housing First” model is no longer official policy, once again leaving the homeless population without a permanent solution to assist them.



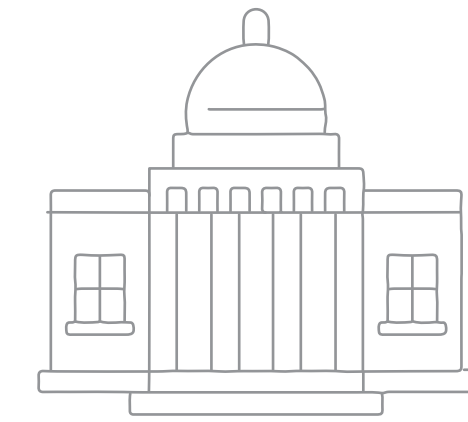
PHILANTHROPY

Salt Lake relies on semi-regular philanthropic donations from powerful entities within the state, most visibly from the Mormon church, which recently donated \$10 million to the local organization Shelter the Homeless. However, large donors trying to mitigate homelessness are not coordinating in a way to more strategically address the issue and measure progress.



POLICE SWEEPS

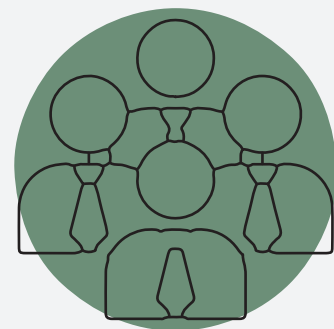
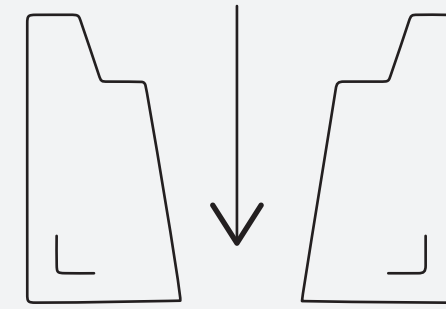
For decades, Salt Lake has employed major sweeps of homeless encampments when they become too big according to the health department, or a “nuisance” to housed individuals. Often during these sweeps arrests are made, belongings are confiscated and trashed, and unhoused individuals are newly displaced.



GOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEES

Utah’s Lieutenant Governor heads a committee that was enacted by law in 1986 entitled The Homeless Coordinating Committee. However, the committee has failed to lead a comprehensive and consistent strategy approach to solving the problem.

GAPS



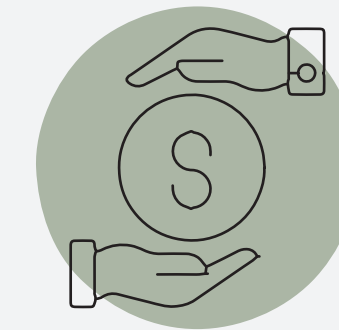
INCONSISTENT & UNREPRESENTATIVE LEADERSHIP

Incomplete data, communication gaps, and inefficient decision-making frameworks have erased the progress made on homelessness from 2005 to 2015. Additionally, decision makers often fail to take into account the opinions of those with lived experience.



LACK OF DIVERSE REPRESENTATION IN NARRATIVE SHAPING

For now, those struggling with homelessness in Salt Lake City have very little sway in terms of how policy is implemented. In Utah, many marginalized populations remain unrepresented in the legislature and homelessness steering committees.



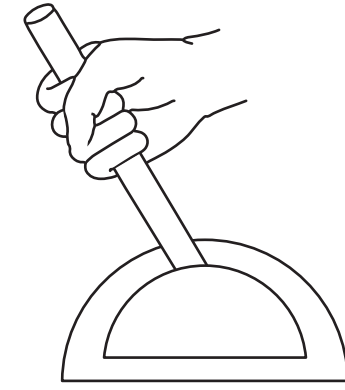
UNCLEAR FUNDING STRATEGY

Since the conclusion of Operation Rio Grande, funding for Utah's response to homelessness has been subjected to the whims of the legislature yearly, and no comprehensive, long-term budget has been set. This lack of organization not only results in reduced transparency, but also adds bottlenecks and uncertainty to the process.

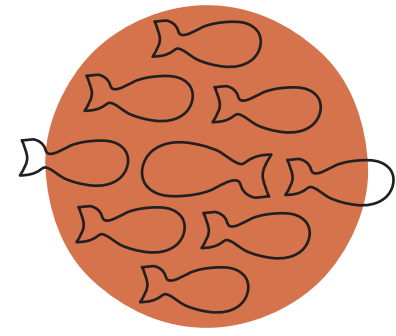


INEFFECTIVE, ENFORCEMENT-HEAVY METHODS

Despite the claims of governmental authorities, the current law enforcement-heavy approach seems particularly ill-suited to the demographics of Salt Lake's homeless population: In 2020, HUD recorded that of the 3,131 homeless persons in Salt Lake's continuum of care 31 percent are "severely mentally ill;" 13 percent are victims of domestic abuse; and 20 percent suffer from chronic substance abuse.

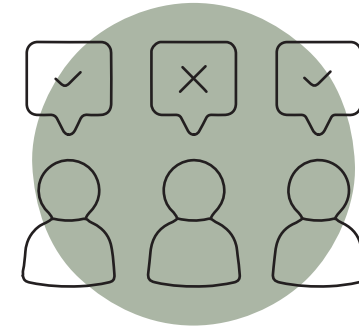


LEVERS OF CHANGE



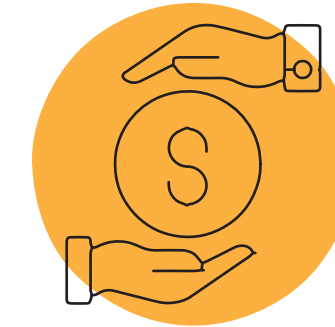
CREATE HOMELESSNESS COUNCIL AND ENSURE DIVERSE & APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATION

Seven years after the end of Utah's 10-year housing first plan, Utah is finally creating its very first council whose sole prerogative is to address homelessness. This council should focus on long-term and holistic strategy. However, merely having a homelessness coordinator and council is not enough. The makeup of the council must be diverse and representative of the marginalized communities it seeks to help.



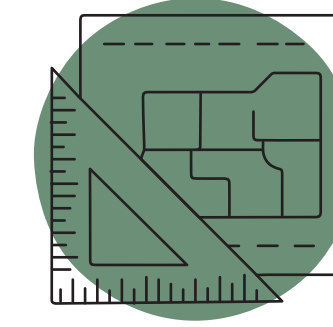
SHIFT PUBLIC OPINION

We identify public opinion as the primary obstacle to any long-term solution. Shifting public opinion is a slow and imprecise process, but ultimately the most important lever of change to solve homelessness in Salt Lake City. This will include a priority on collecting better data and using it to tell more accurate stories, as well as the voice of powerful stakeholders such as the Mormon Church in advocacy of supporting the unhoused.



ORGANIZE FUNDING

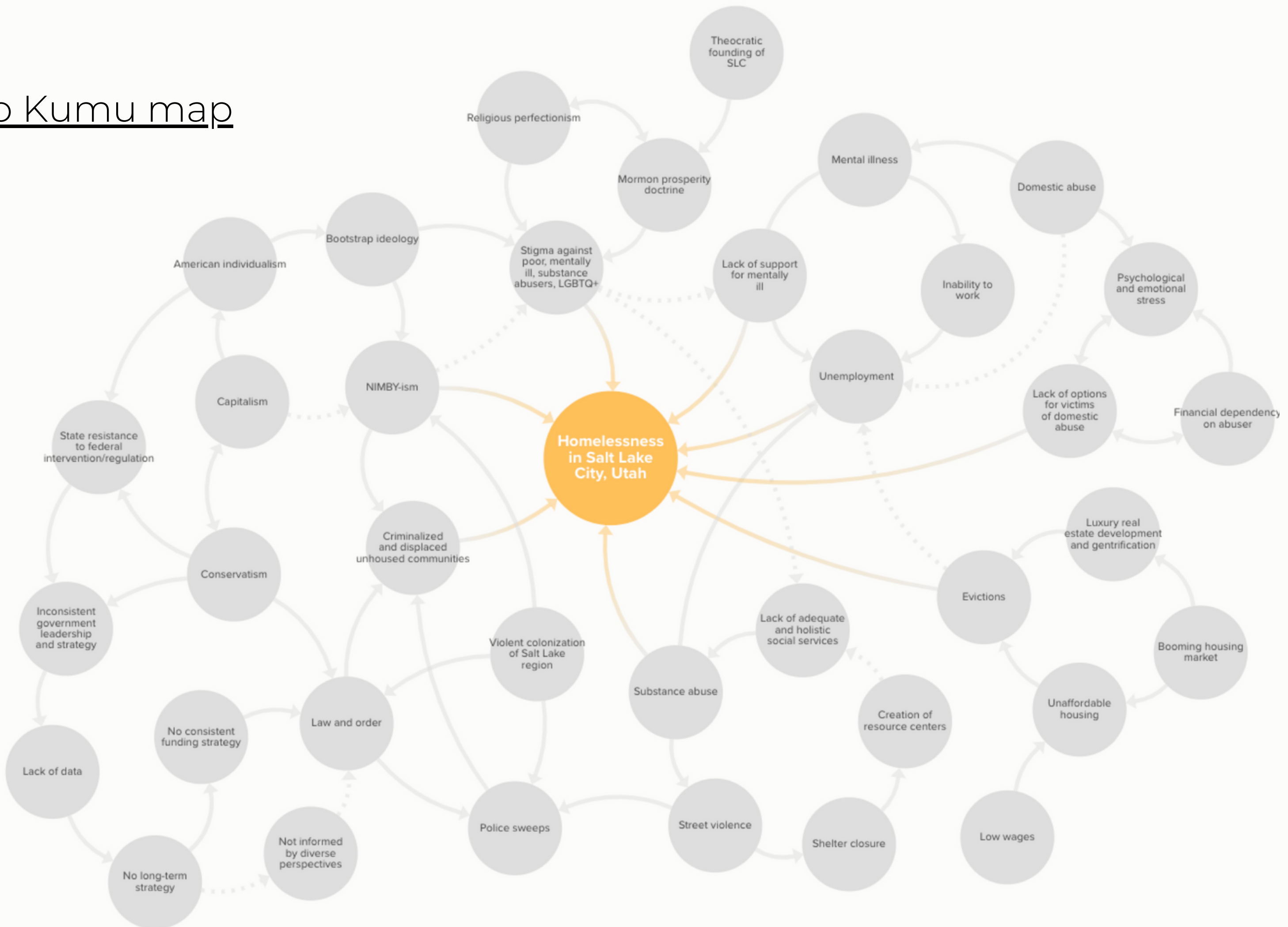
One of the first tasks for the homelessness council should be to create a philanthropic consortium and to develop a coordinated funding model. Addressing the lack of organization in how governmental funding and private-sector donations are spent is low-hanging fruit that can and should help to slow or even reverse the trend of increased homelessness over the last four years.



IMPLEMENT EVIDENCE-BASED METHODS OF COMMUNITY CARE & CITY PLANNING

Once Utah policymakers begin focusing less on law enforcement-heavy responses that make little progress in solving the problem, evidence-based methods of care such as housing first type solutions are a cheap, efficient, and effective alternative response to homelessness.

[Link to Kumu map](#)



Homelessness
in Salt Lake
City, Utah

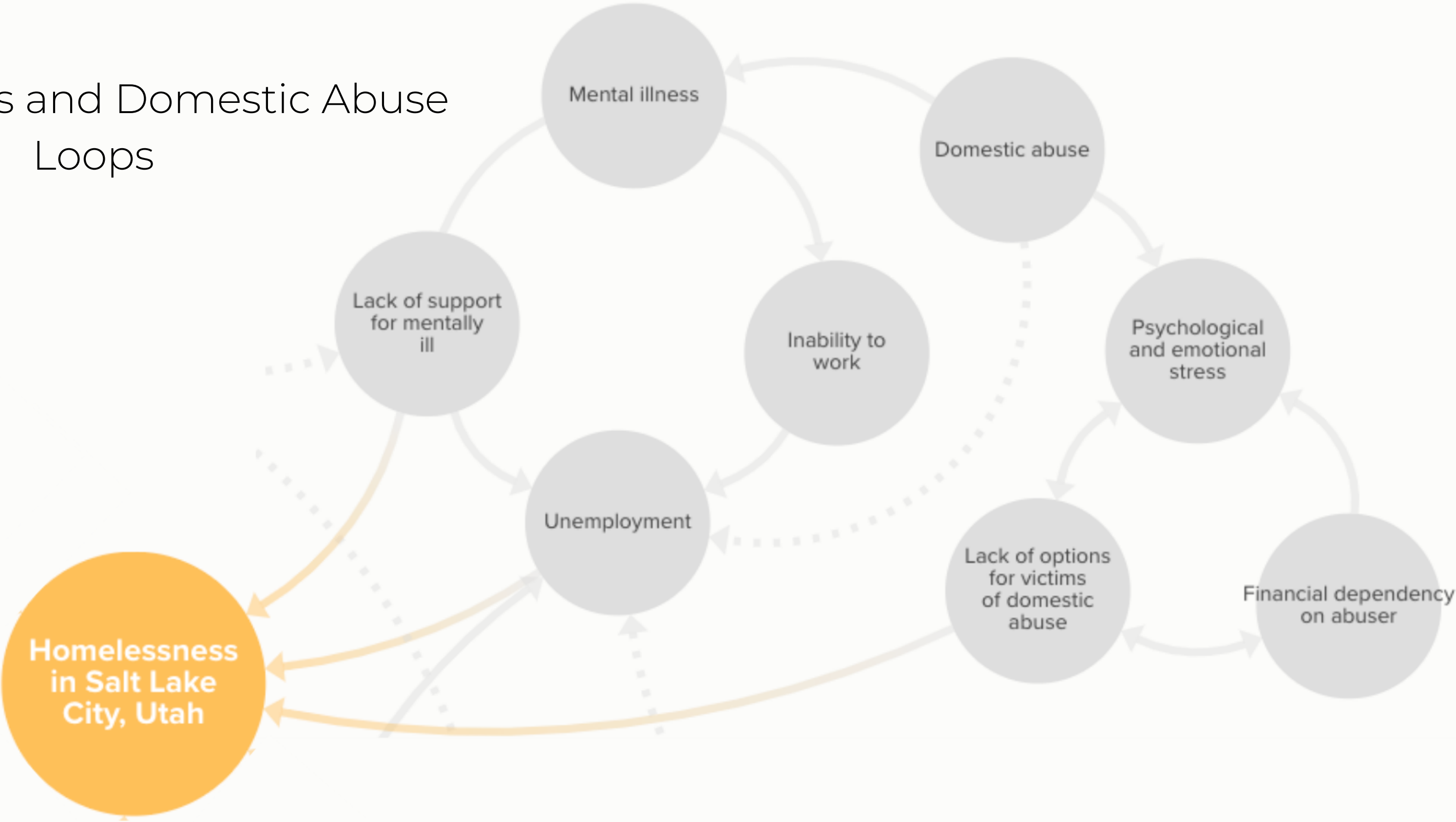
Substance Abuse Loop



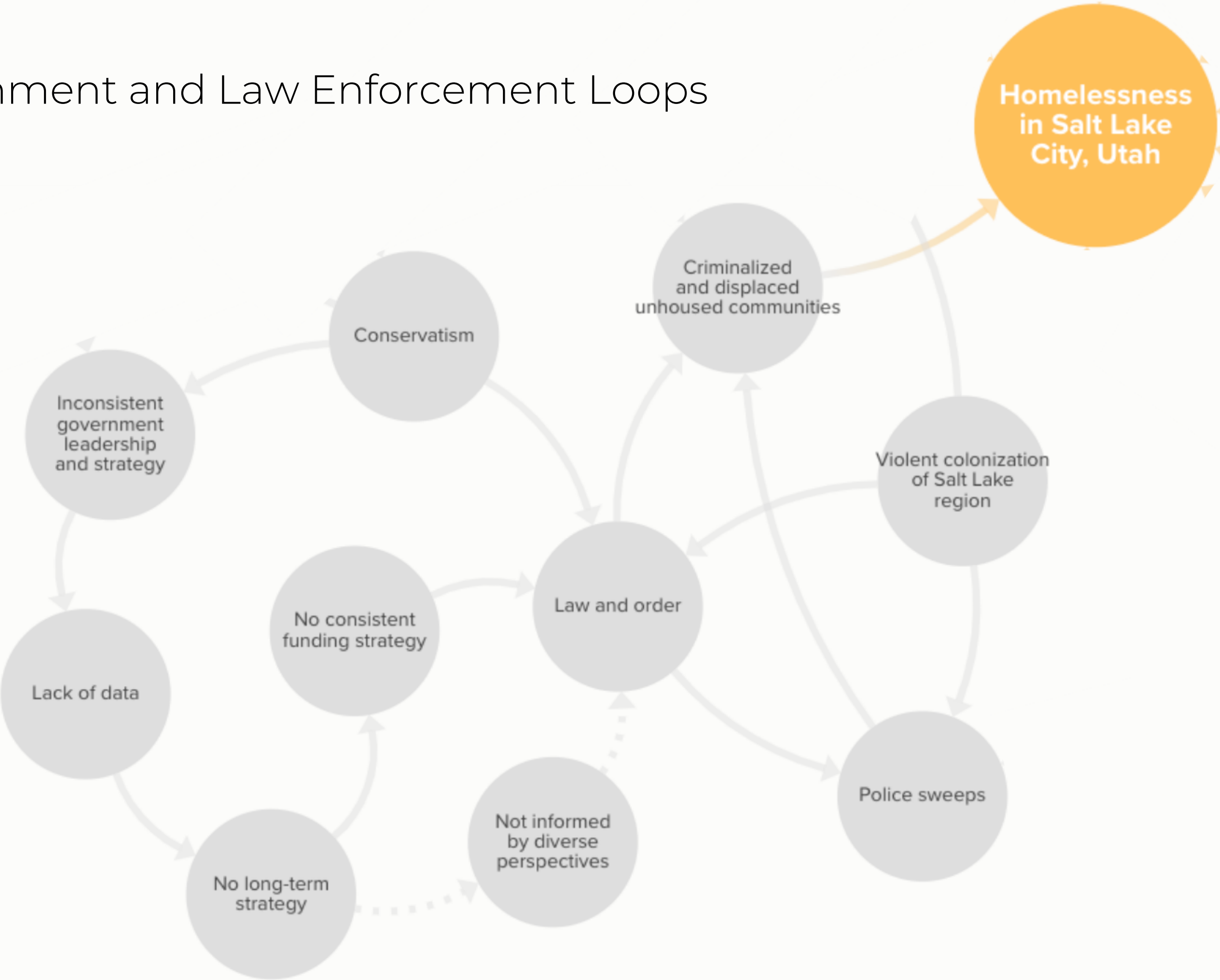


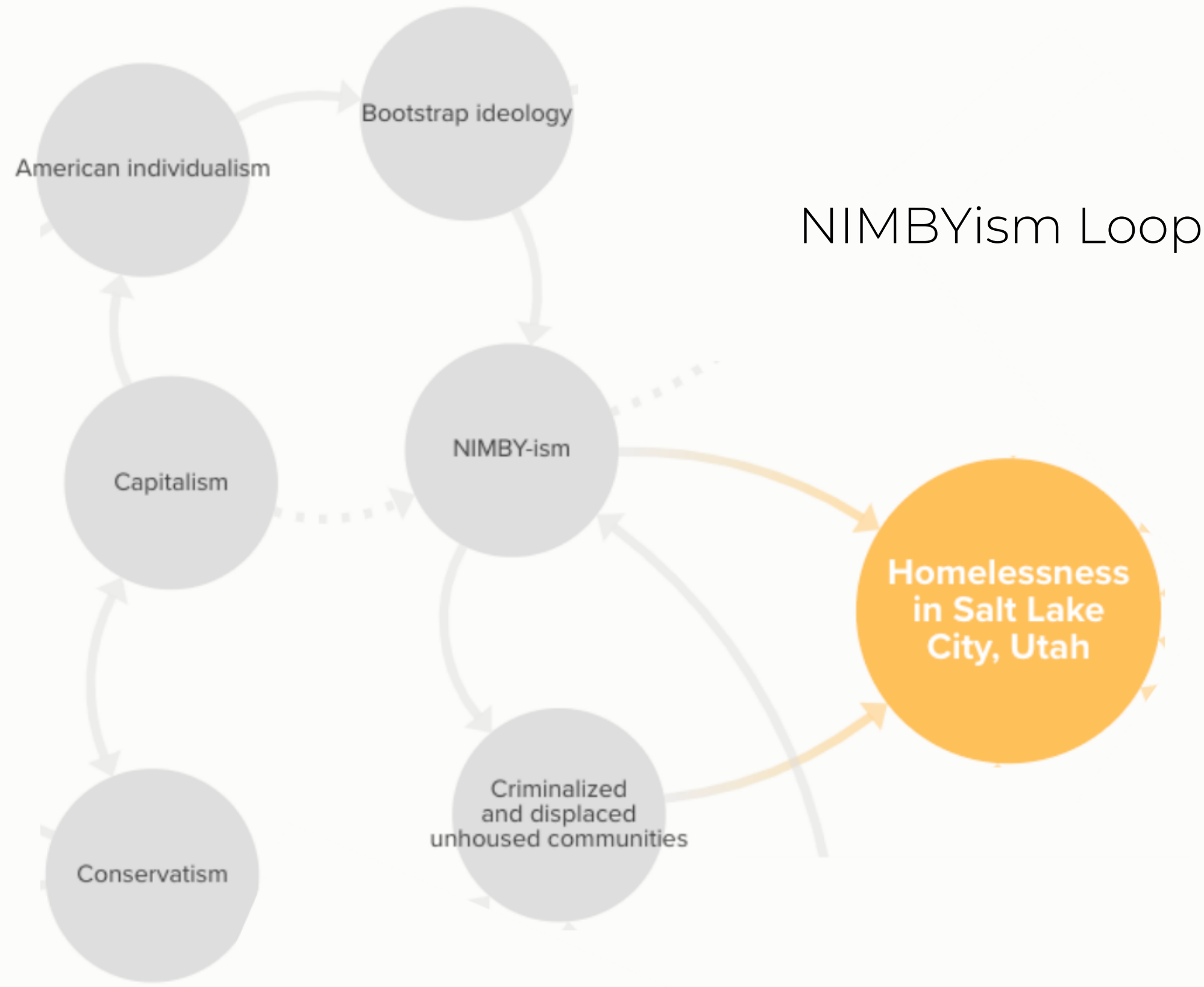
Unaffordable Housing Loop

Mental Illness and Domestic Abuse Loops



Government and Law Enforcement Loops





Religious Culture Loop

