



IMPACT REPORT

2024—2025

S

SHELTERFORCE
Essential Reporting on Affordable Housing

OUR MISSION

01

Shelterforce uses the power of journalism to inspire, inform, and hold accountable all those working toward more just, equitable, and thriving communities where every person has a place to call home.

OUR VALUES



Transparency and Accuracy

Clear. Honest. Trusted.

We deliver fact-based journalism that communities can rely on.



Justice

Equity at the Center

We amplify voices from underrepresented communities and push for fairness in housing.



Belief in Solutions

Challenges + Action = Change

We spotlight strategies and innovations that move us forward.



Independence

Truth Above All

Our reporting is free from political or financial influence.



Flexibility

Adapting, Always Grounded

We adjust to shifting landscapes while holding firm to our mission.



Solidarity

Standing Together

We lift up the struggles and victories of those on the front lines of housing justice.



Connection

Local to National

We show how everyday experiences connect to larger systems and trends.

At *Shelterforce*, our values aren't just words—they're the foundation of 50 years of trusted housing journalism.

LETTER FROM THE CEOs

02

The past few years have been a defining moment for housing justice—and for *Shelterforce*. Across the country, the affordability of housing and the very fabric of our communities have been tested like never before. This urgency has deepened the demand for trusted, independent reporting—pushing us to grow, adapt, and evolve alongside our readers.

We've strengthened our strategic direction through a comprehensive five-year plan that guides our transformation into a fully realized multimedia nonprofit newsroom. Our goal remains clear: deliver accessible, solutions-driven journalism that informs, challenges, and inspires action toward building equitable, thriving communities.

At the same time, we continue asking the questions that have always driven our work: How can we best support our audience's pursuit of housing justice? What lessons and successes can we share across the country? What hard conversations still need an independent space to be explored?

In 2024, we launched a redesigned website to better serve as a hub for connection and knowledge. We've expanded our coverage—from quick-turnaround policy analysis to in-depth, investigative storytelling—while holding tightly to what defines us most: independence, integrity, and a belief in the power of truth.

As we celebrate 50 years of impact, we honor our roots in community development and activism while looking ahead with bold purpose. Together with our readers, partners, and supporters, we are building the next chapter of this movement—one grounded in truth, equity, and collective action.

In gratitude and solidarity,

Schlonn Hawkins, *CEO/Publisher*

Miriam Axel-Lute, *CEO/Editor-in-Chief*



SCHLONN HAWKINS

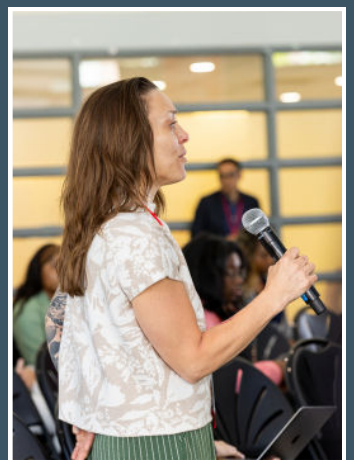
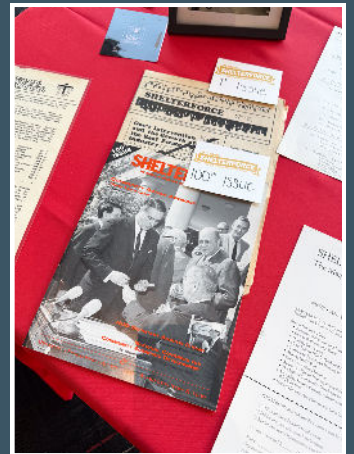
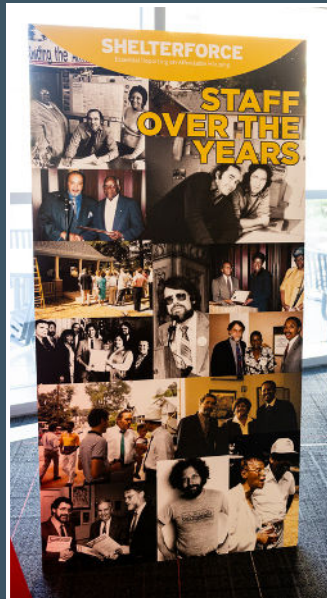


MIRIAM AXEL-LUTE

50TH ANNIVERSARY HIGHLIGHT

03

More than 150 people gathered in Newark, New Jersey, for *A Legacy of Impact, A Future of Possibilities* (April 28-29), to celebrate *Shelterforce's* 50th anniversary and the future of housing justice. The two-day conference featured inspiring keynote speakers, thought-provoking sessions on topics from climate resilience to storytelling, and reflections from *Shelterforce's* founding members on 50 years of impact. With gratitude to our sponsors, partners, and supporters, this milestone event honored our legacy and looked ahead to the next 50 years of community-driven change.



50 YEARS of
SHELTERFORCE
ESSENTIAL REPORTING ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

50 YEARS of SHELTERFORCE

ESSENTIAL REPORTING ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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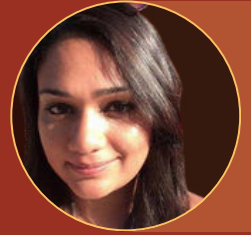
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Steven Gomez
Citizens Bank

“As leaders committed to housing justice, we believe *Shelterforce's* reporting strengthens the entire field. Each of us brings unique expertise—but together, we stand behind *Shelterforce's* role as a trusted voice and truth teller.”

		2024	2025
		\$898,500	\$954,225
INCOME	 FUNDING PARTNERS	90%	85%
	 EARNED INCOME	5%	10%
	 GENEROUS FRIENDS	5%	5%
EXPENSES	 EDITORIAL GENIUS	83%	90%
	 VIRTUAL OFFICE	10%	5%
	 READER ACCESS	7%	5%

**SHELTERFORCE IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE
GENEROUS SUPPORT OF OUR FUNDING PARTNERS:**

ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION | OAK FOUNDATION
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**WE ARE ALSO SUSTAINED BY
GENEROUS FRIENDS AND INDIVIDUAL DONORS.
READERS LIKE YOU KEEP SHELTERFORCE STRONG.
IF YOU'RE ABLE, CONSIDER MAKING A GIFT TODAY.**

[SHELTERFORCE.ORG/DONATE](https://shelterforce.org/donate)



Several times each year, *Shelterforce* takes a deep dive into a particular theme or topic in the housing and community development worlds. These examinations are part of what we call **Under the Lens** series. They consist of in-depth reporting, insights from people who work in the field, analysis, live conversations, and more.

In the last two years, we've shined a light on the creative ways in which **communities have banded together** to keep land and buildings out of the hands of investors, the current state of the **community development field**, how housing is affected by rapid **technological advances** and **unprecedented environmental threats**, and more.

Our Under the Lens series often explore how different people, departments, organizations, and fields move beyond operating in a bubble to better serve communities.

WHAT IT TAKES

Each Under the Lens series takes several months to plan and launch, which amounts to more than 200 hours and \$40,000.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

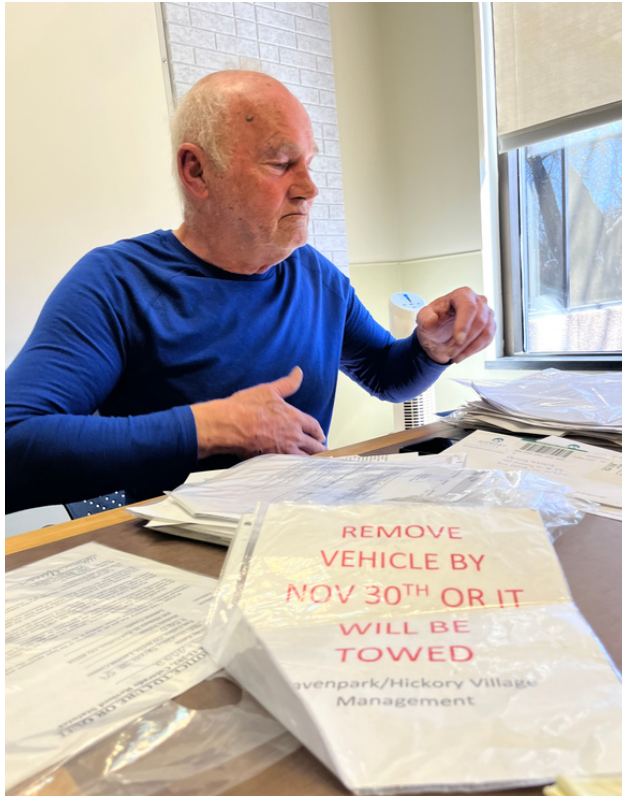
“When we are thinking about the costs [of] social and affordable housing we should consider this. Excellent series from *Shelterforce*.”

—Niall Rhatigan on **Street Blocks to Alphabet Blocks: The Housing-Education Connection**.

“So many great ideas and solutions for creating healthy homes and communities...”

—Jeraldene Lovell-Cole on **Fit to Live In: Fixing Our Housing Stock**.

Over the last two years, *Shelterforce* has gone deeper than ever before to bring readers more below-the-surface views of the issues and topics they care about most. We've published hundreds of in-depth articles, explainers, and more. Here's a small sample of the important topics we've covered.



Derald Ketels goes through tow warnings and eviction notices from his landlord, Havenpark Communities. The company has faced complaints from residents, housing advocates, and even policymakers for its business practices. Enterprise's subsidiary has made loans to Havenpark. Photo by Shelby R. King

MISSION-DRIVEN OR PROFIT-DRIVEN?

Enterprise Community Partners is a major player in the affordable housing world. It's one of the largest affordable housing providers and charitable lenders in the nation.

But we learned that Enterprise has knowingly profited from deals that contradict its mission—deals that led to higher housing costs for some low-income renters, and loss of housing for others.

“
**Excellent
investigative
journalism.**

—Dan Immergluck, urban housing professor and researcher

Shelterforce's investigative reporter Shelby R. King reported on the story in, “**Mission-Driven or Profit-Driven? Enterprise's Hidden Role in Mobile Home Park Purchases**,” which was published in 2025.

AN IMMINENT THREAT TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Rising property insurance premiums are more than a financial burden—they're an imminent threat to all affordable housing. Through a multipart series, freelance reporter Franklin Schneider **explored the issue** through the perspective of nonprofit affordable housing providers currently facing dire challenges. He also reported on strategies that could combat rising costs and protect homeowners and affordable rental housing.



Las Brisas, an affordable apartment building in Houston, was sold due to rising insurance costs.

Photo courtesy of Avenue

JOURNALISM ACCOLADES

A 2024 story about medical respite programs and how they help unhoused people heal earned an award in the **2025 Top of the Rockies Excellence in Journalism contest**. The article, written by freelance reporter Robert Davis, received third-place honors in the contest's social justice reporting category.

Another 2024 *Shelterforce* story was a **finalist for INN's Breaking Barriers Award**, which honors reporting that brings new understanding to issues affecting historically underrepresented, disadvantaged, or marginalized communities, resulting in impactful change.

In “**Will This Resident Group Get Full Control of the Complex They Helped Fix?**” freelance reporter Amanda Abrams explored an unresolved housing deal decades in the making between HUD and a group of Cambodian refugees in California. Thanks to our reporting, HUD has reached out to the group, conducted a site visit of the complex, and is discussing how to honor their end of the deal.



A protest against ICE in Chicago on June 10, 2025. Photo by Flickr user Paul Goyette, CC BY 2.0

BRINGING CONTEXT AND CLARITY AMID CHAOS AND CONFUSION

At the end of 2024, everyone was thinking the same thing: Could the drastic changes the president and his allies threatened against affordable housing programs and agencies happen? We've published **more than 40 stories** exploring the upheaval that has come to HUD and what that has meant for affordable housing funding, fair housing, housing vouchers recipients, organizing work, and more—providing readers with context and clarity amid a landscape of confusion and misinformation.

“

Thank you to everyone at *Shelterforce* for reporting on and analyzing the potential impact of the tsunami of current attacks on unhoused and housing-insecure people. Your work is always important, but maybe never more so than in the current moment.

—Fran Quigley, Health and Human Rights Clinic at the Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law

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In April 2017, as renovations of the Pythian Building neared completion, a plaque commemorating the building's history was unveiled across the street at Duncan Plaza. The high-stakes, high-profile community land trust project was once hailed as a triumph but ended in disaster for its residents. Photo by Infrogmation of New Orleans, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

THE PERMANENT AFFORDABILITY THAT WASN'T

The renovation of the Pythian Building in New Orleans was expected to be a triumph in affordable housing. But a couple of years and millions of dollars after the renovation was complete, tenants were left scrambling to find a new place to call home. What happened?

Shelterforce's Shelby R. King **found that through a series of miscommunications,** logistical delays, odd funding snafus, and other complicated missteps, the deed restriction that would have secured permanent affordability was never filed.

Our reporting offers important lessons for others working on ambitious projects like the Pythian project.

HOUSING THROUGH THE EYES OF AN ARTIST

We've always believed that the arts can foster social cohesion, engagement, and dialogue in communities—teaching us ways to better communicate and work together. While we've been reporting for years on the role that arts and culture play in communities, in 2025 we made a more dedicated effort to **highlight housing-related poetry, artwork, photography,** and more.

What does **impact** mean for *Shelterforce*?

When our coverage leads to direct change

This change could be legislative, policy-based, or related to internal practices. Our reporting may be used to lobby for a bill, guide leadership decisions, or inform funding priorities.

When our coverage helps people on the frontlines

Our reporting keeps people up to date, clarifies tricky concepts, and educates others—empowering people to make real change in their communities.

When our coverage is part of moving the conversation forward

Our coverage pushes the dialogue on affordable housing and housing justice.

Measuring impact like this can be tricky business, but here's how we do it:



Looking at engagement analytics that show us how reliably people open our newsletter and how long they spend with our content.



Listening to our readers when they tell us how our content has impact.



Tracking backlinks, reprints, mentions, shares, and similar indications of influence.

Shelterforce continues to attract a deeply invested audience of advocates, practitioners, organizers, researchers, policymakers, and journalists who look to us for trusted analysis on housing justice. This audience does more than consume information—they interact, share, and return across multiple channels.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Our **audience is growing, loyal, and highly engaged** across platforms.
- **Email is our strongest retention and engagement channel**, far outperforming industry averages.
- **LinkedIn and Facebook amplify our stories at scale**, reaching hundreds of thousands of readers.
- Our **new Bluesky presence shows strong early traction**, especially among journalists and policy experts.
- **Audio storytelling is rising**, with a 35 percent increase in listens in 2025.
- Across digital channels, ***Shelterforce* content is not only seen**—it's acted upon, shared, and discussed.



AUDIENCE GROWTH AND REACH

Total audience members across all platforms: 25,158

This growth reflects increasing interest in housing equity and policy.

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERACTIONS

40,196+ interactions across platforms

Including reactions, comments, shares, reposts, and content interactions. This level of engagement shows that our reporting doesn't just get seen—it sparks conversation and action.

IMPRESSIONS AND VIEWS

400,000 impressions and views across social channels

Our content is consistently reaches hundreds of thousands of people, expanding awareness of housing issues nationwide.

EMAIL PERFORMANCE

With 14,540 total subscribers, email marketing is our most loyal channel, continuing to outperform national benchmarks

Our email readers are highly engaged. With a 48 percent open rate and a 13 percent click rate, our email performance is far above media industry averages.

AUDIO/STORY LISTENS

Almost 50,000 listens means a growing appetite for narrative journalism and community stories

Our audio storytelling continues to resonate with audiences, with listenership up 91 percent in 2024 and another 35 percent in 2025—clear evidence of growing interest in narrative, multimedia journalism.

THANK YOU FOR BEING A MEMBER OF THE *SHELTERFORCE* COMMUNITY.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this year's impact—our readers, partners, organizers, funders, and community allies. Your support makes it possible for *Shelterforce* to elevate community voices, strengthen housing justice movements, and deliver independent reporting that drives change.

We're grateful to do this work alongside you. Together, we'll continue building a future where every community can thrive.



Schlonn Hawkins, CEO/Publisher | **Miriam Axel-Lute**, CEO/Editor-in-Chief
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Lara Heard, Associate Editor | **Elizabeth Sheedy**, Assistant Editor/Copyeditor
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