

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than 8,000 people experience homelessness on any given night in the suburban cities, urban centers, and rural towns of King County according to our local One Night Count. It is recognized that many other members of our community experience homelessness but are not included in this point in time count.

Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness is an expression of our collective commitment to actively seek long-term and sustainable solutions to the issue, rather than continuing to simply manage episodes of homelessness as they occur. It is a commitment to ensure that there is an appropriate, affordable roof over the bed of everyone living in King County — whether young or old, living alone or with families, sick or well.

Eight organizations, coalitions, and local governments came together in 2002 to form the Committee to End Homelessness in King County, a unified effort to provide the vision and leadership required to develop and implement a plan to end homelessness in King County, Washington. Homeless or formerly homeless youth and adults, faith communities, philanthropy, businesses, local governments, non-profit human service providers, non-profit housing developers, advocates, and other stakeholders from throughout the county were involved in the planning process.

Our Vision for the Future

Ending a complex problem like homelessness requires a commitment from all members of our community — government officials, philanthropies, faith and civic groups, communities of color and their institutions and organizations, businesses including small business owners, housing and service providers, and concerned individuals. It requires a willingness to examine the assumptions under which we have approached this issue in the past, to assess honestly and critically our activities and initiatives, and, ultimately, to do business differently through changing systems, redirecting existing resources, and securing commitments for additional funding.

Although the focus of this plan is to end homelessness within ten years through strategies that emphasize permanent housing alternatives and supportive services, the Committee to End Homelessness in King County recognizes that people experiencing homelessness are at immediate personal risk and have a basic right to safety, as do all members of our community. Interim survival mechanisms — services focused on keeping people alive — that respect the rights of all community members and neighborhoods are necessary until such time that affordable permanent housing is available to all.

Homeless Individuals and Families in King County

For the purposes of this plan, it is estimated that more than 8,000 people are homeless in King County each night. This includes:

- 420 youth and young adults up to age 24
- 2,475 people in families
- 5,105 single adults, including 2,500 that meet the federal definition for chronically homeless

These numbers represent the best point-in-time estimate available to the community at the time this plan was issued; providers and advocates believe that these numbers drastically undercount homeless persons. The community will implement strategies to better identify the number of homeless persons in King County.

Through endorsing this plan, communities throughout the county are joining forces to end homelessness.

It is a housing and human services undertaking of unprecedented proportions, and one that will require a decade to complete. Our success requires the wholehearted participation of individuals, civic and faith organizations, communities of color and their institutions and organizations businesses including small business owners, charitable institutions, and government entities in every sector. As a community, we can — and we will — end homelessness.

Together we will:

- End homelessness, not manage it
- Create a new leadership structure that facilitates discussion and collaboration among funders, government agencies, housing and service providers, homeless persons, advocates, and community volunteers to help assure a unified and targeted approach to ending homelessness in King County
- Implement practices that research has shown to be particularly effective and promising
- Focus resources on preventing homelessness and immediately housing those who do experience homelessness, prioritizing a “housing first” approach that removes barriers to housing and provides on-site services that engage and support individuals to maintain their health and housing stability
- Ensure a fully coordinated countywide response at both the client and system level through networking enhanced community-based service sites that offer local access throughout the county to comprehensive assessment, referral, and a range of culturally competent services
- Increase significantly the housing options that are affordable, available, and appropriate to meet the needs of homeless individuals, families, and youth
- Transform mainstream services — the myriad of publicly funded programs that provide services, housing, and income supports to poor people — to make them more accessible, relevant, and appropriate for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Bolster the capacity and responsibility of mainstream service systems for collaborative planning, financing, and delivery of housing and support services for clients reentering the community from public institutions
- Establish clear measures to identify needs and assure accountability for outcomes and reward providers who effectively serve those individuals and families with high levels of need

Activities and Anticipated Outcomes over the Next Decade

Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness

is not just about creating housing units — although nearly 4,500 new units will be needed. It also calls for implementing a range of prevention and service-delivery strategies that have been demonstrated to be more effective and efficient than our current practices. The significant focus of this

plan is on investing our precious local resources in a manner that better serves homeless people and, in so doing, using our resources more effectively.

Our approach will be to:

- Develop detailed action plans for prevention, outreach, service delivery, and housing

- Improve system-wide efficiencies and outcomes using existing housing stock, funding and resources
- Refine our long-range targets based on increasing levels of knowledge and sophistication
- Seek additional funding from local, state, federal, and philanthropic sources, as needed

The following table illustrates the actions we will take and the impact those actions will have.

Year	Priority Actions Taken	What is Happening with Ending Homelessness?
1 (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating the governance to implement and monitor the plan • Improving data collection methods • Building the community-wide political will necessary to succeed in years 2 through 10 	<p>By the end of 2005:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An inclusive, effective governing structure is fully operating • A public awareness campaign is in place to educate the public on the causes, costs, and impacts of homelessness in our community
2 – 5 (2006–2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding “mainstream” service system eligibility for people at risk of becoming homeless, expediting entry into housing for people who become homeless, and providing appropriate services to them • Working together with mainstream systems to implement strategies to ensure successful reentry • Realigning existing funds to support programs that research has proven to be effective and restructuring systems to enable better coordination among prevention and service programs • Developing affordable, supportive housing and assertive outreach and engagement teams to help people secure housing, increase independence, and maintain housing stability • Coordinating with the Regional Human Services Task Force as appropriate 	<p>By the end of 2010:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of individuals and families who experience homelessness will be significantly reduced • Programs that focus on the long-term homeless will show a decrease in client numbers • A decline in the number of people living on the streets without shelter will be seen in some areas of the county • Data collection processes will be in place, including the Safe Harbors HMIS system, and we will use this data to mark progress toward our goals

Year	Priority Actions Taken	What is Happening with Ending Homelessness?
6 – 9 (2011–2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public institutions (jails, prisons, hospitals, foster care, etc.) and housing programs have collaborated to develop programs and policies to prevent discharging people onto the streets without appropriate housing Outreach and engagement teams are engaging people who are homeless on the street and helping them move into housing 	<p>By the end of 2013:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our infrastructure will be built up such that the public could expect to see a notable decline in street homelessness Shelter stays will begin to shorten for all populations, and some shelters will close or reconfigure their programs
10 (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fine tuning of the system’s transformation Using client-outcome and system-outcome data from various sources, including Safe Harbors, to prevent people from becoming homeless in King County 	<p>By the end of 2014:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness will be virtually ended People who enter into homelessness will have immediate access to housing with appropriate supports Downsized outreach and emergency services will continue to aid individuals and families who become homeless, but stays in this system will be short There will be no need for tent cities or encampments



Supportive housing combines permanent housing with the supportive programs people need to break the cycle of homelessness. Photo by Stefanie Felix, courtesy of Plymouth Housing Group.

Next Steps to Ending Homelessness

The Committee to End Homelessness in King County will seek support and endorsement of the plan from key stakeholders throughout the county, including civic and faith groups, communities of color and their institutions and organizations, businesses, small business owners, housing and service providers, homeless persons and their advocates, and elected officials.

In early 2005, a Governing Board charged with building political will countywide and overseeing plan implementation will form.

The Governing Board will convene a Consumer Advisory Council to assist them in formulating policy and monitoring plan implementation.

An Interagency Council comprising representatives of multiple systems will work to set priorities, develop detailed action plans, and coordinate activities. Our actions will be guided by the vision of “a roof over every bed in King County,” and we will continue our efforts until this simple statement is realized.