

# Homelessness & housing toolkit for cities



Tools and resources to address homelessness and affordable housing from real cases in cities across Washington.



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# City resources for addressing homelessness and affordable housing

Cities of every size are grappling with increasing homelessness, lack of affordable housing for low-wage workers and their families, and inadequate mental health and addiction treatment systems.

After many years of decline, homelessness in Washington is growing again, despite significant investment and efforts to reduce it over the last decade.

Some communities face rapidly increasing housing costs that are pricing working families out of cities. When markets in larger urban communities are red hot, there is powerful pressure for existing affordable units to renovate and raise rents. Less urbanized areas of the state face very low vacancy rates and soft development economies, where new construction is not occurring at the pace needed to meet demand and accommodate growth.

Our inadequate mental health care and chemical dependency treatment systems compound the problem. Washington ranks 46th in the nation in the number of psychiatric beds available for those suffering from mental illness, and our emergency rooms are overwhelmed by the number of people who need help. Opioid overdoses are now the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. with 47,055 deaths in 2014. Both methamphetamine and opioid addiction are driving this epidemic of addiction, which does not discriminate when it comes to race, sex, geography, or income level.

People with chemical dependency and mental health problems are significantly more likely to be homeless and homelessness is likely to accelerate their downward spiral, adding isolation, trauma, and premature aging to their list of disabling conditions.

Solving these problems fall to a varied group of federal and state agencies, local governments, and nonprofit partners. The cost of homelessness to taxpayers is significant: increased police calls for service, incarceration, emergency room visits, and locally-funded homeless services strain local budgets. Cities struggle with limited resources and, often, funding for homelessness and housing does not flow directly to cities.

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*After many years of decline, homelessness in Washington is growing again and housing affordability continues to be a challenge across the income spectrum.*

## **Cities need a variety of strategies to address these crises**

There is no single solution to these problems and cities need a variety of strategies to address these crises. This toolkit is meant to serve as a resource for elected officials and city staff who seek options and ideas on how to respond.

The following pages offer descriptions of a variety of tools and programs. For each article you will find a brief description of the topic and information on where to access additional resources.

Cities are on the front lines of our public policy issues but, as the programs in this toolkit show, cities can't solve it alone. Reducing homelessness and increasing affordable housing requires a sustained, innovative approach and a willingness to partner with county, state, and federal agencies, and as well as local faith communities, nonprofits, and ordinary citizens. None of these programs are one-size-fits-all solutions, but the following pages will offer ideas and inspiration so cities can continue meeting the challenges of an ever-changing world.

# Homelessness and affordable housing funds explained

## **State authorized sales tax to support affordable housing and related services**

In July 2015, the legislature approved HB 2263 which provides local governments a tool to obtain funding to house vulnerable residents by implementing a one-tenth of one percent sales tax.

County legislative authorities may implement a 0.1 percent sales and use tax, if approved by a majority of voters, in order to fund housing and related services. A city legislative authority may implement the whole or remainder of the tax if it's approved by a majority of voters and the county has not opted to implement the full tax.

This new revenue stream is meant to serve people living with incomes at 60 percent or below of a given county's area median income (AMI). The majority of the funding (at least 60 percent) is designated for building new affordable housing and facilities to deliver mental health services and/or, the operation and maintenance of newly-constructed affordable housing or mental health services. The remainder of the funds can be used for the operation, delivery and evaluation of mental health programs or housing-related services.

## **Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Tax**

The Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Tax (MIDD) allows counties to impose a sales and use tax of one-tenth of one percent to fund programs serving people with mental illness or chemical dependencies. Since 2011, any city with a population greater than 30,000 has the authority to implement the MIDD tax if it has not been passed by the county. Programs and services that can be funded by this revenue stream include, but are not limited to, treatment services, case management, and housing that are a component of a coordinated chemical dependency or mental health treatment program or service.

## **Low Income Housing Tax Credit**

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) is a federal tax credit program created in 1986 to provide private owners an incentive to create and maintain affordable housing. The IRS allocates program funds on a per capita basis to each state. The Washington State Housing Finance Commission (HFC) administers the tax credits as a source of funding that housing developers use for a single project. Investors in housing projects can apply to the HFC for different tax credits depending on project type.

## **The Housing Choice Voucher**

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program is a federal housing voucher for very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford housing in the private market. Participants are free to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and is not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects. Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing authorities. Housing authorities receive federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the voucher program. Usually, a housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the housing authority on behalf of the participating family. The individual or family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

## **Community Development Block Grants**

Started in 1974, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is one of HUD's longest running programs and provides annual grants to local government and states for a wide range of community needs. The CDBG program works to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses.

CDBG appropriations are allocated between states and local jurisdictions called "non-entitlement" and "entitlement" communities. Entitlement communities are comprised of central cities of Metropolitan Statistical Areas, metropolitan cities with populations of at least 50,000, and qualified urban counties with a population of 200,000 or more (excluding the populations of entitlement cities). States distribute CDBG funds to non-entitlement localities not qualified as entitlement communities.

### **HOME Investment and Partnership Program**

The HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) is similar to CDBG, except that the funds are for the sole use of providing affordable housing for low and very low income individuals. Funding is allocated to states or participating jurisdictions. Funds can be used for building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or homeownership or providing direct rental assistance to low-income people. The program is flexible and allows states and local governments to use these funds for grants, direct loans, loan guarantees or other forms of credit enhancements, or rental assistance or security deposits.

### **Washington State Housing Trust Fund**

The Washington State Department of Commerce administers a Housing Trust Fund (HTF) funded primarily through the capital budget. Since 1987, the HTF has contributed over \$1 billion toward the construction and maintenance of over 40,000 affordable homes. HTF dollars support a wide range of projects serving a diverse array of low-income populations. Projects can serve people with incomes up to 80 percent of area median income, but the majority of projects funded to date serve households with special needs or incomes below 30 percent area median income, including homeless families, seniors, farmworkers, and people with developmental disabilities. Local governments can apply to the HTF for eligible activities.

### **Document recording fees**

Document recording fees are Washington State's largest source of funding for homelessness programs. Counties charge fees on recorded documents and are permitted to retain a portion for affordable housing and homeless programs. Counties generally include cities in committees in determining how to spend the local share of the collected fees. Another portion of these funds are redirected to the Department of Commerce to fund various programs, including the Consolidated Homeless Grant program.



# Compass Crossing tests low cost, modular micro units

A project in Seattle is combining a Housing First program model and elements of the Olympia/Thurston County tiny house village model. Compass Housing Alliance (CHA) brought these ideas together in a project recently given a \$1 million boost from the Paul G. Allen Foundation.

The project, known as Compass Crossing, will feature a “progressive engagement model of trauma-informed care” for the residents’ anticipated physical and mental health conditions and/or chemical dependencies. This will include onsite clinical staff, social service support, and property management. Compass Crossing combines this comprehensive program model with safe, affordable, steel-frame modular living spaces and communal facilities such as a kitchen, community space, and garden. These unique and intriguing attributes make the project both responsive to residents’ needs and less costly than conventional construction.

Rather than conform to the traditional definitions of permanent, transitional, or emergency housing, Compass Crossing intends to “promote a new model of ‘Responsive Housing and Services’ that can be adapted to the specific needs of the people we serve, wherever they are on their journey from homelessness.”

Compass Crossing expects to help 50 individuals find stability over the expected three-year occupancy at the site.

The development will include 13 housing units, including six 240-square-foot double occupancy rooms and seven 160-square-foot single occupancy rooms. Compass Crossing will be pet-friendly, include storage for the residents, and provide options for partners to be housed together.

By utilizing steel-frame modular construction from OneBuild, an experienced supplier of off-site manufactured building modules and components for the construction industry, the project is expected to be faster and cheaper to build and use fewer resources than traditional on-site construction. The estimated timeline is ten weeks for site work and five days to install the buildings and connect utilities. The target date for completion was December 2016.

The modular units will become a permanent affordable asset that can be moved from one under-utilized site to another as development occurs.

Compared to the number of homeless reported in the point-in-time count last winter, these 13 units alone may seem a meager start. But the key factor that garnered the support of the Allen Foundation was the potential for scalability, up or down. Both CHA’s Chief Operating Officer, Bill Reddy and OneBuild’s Founder and CEO, Dale Sperling, emphasized that this is a “proof of concept” project, and that the Allen Foundation was particularly interested in the fact that units are designed for eventual relocation and can be reconfigured, depending on the size and attributes of other potential sites.

According to Sperling, the modularity of these units, together with their low cost, make them ideal to rapidly and cost-effectively respond to the homelessness crisis. Roughly ten of these units can be produced for the cost of a single conventionally built unit. According to Sperling, each of these modules can be built for around \$30,000 compared to \$300,000 to \$400,000 each for a site-built apartment unit. The modular construction also reduces the site development costs. The total development cost per unit is much higher than the cost of the unit itself, skewing this comparison.

Although the steel-frame modular units may share some outward resemblance to a shipping container, they are not recycled shipping containers. Each module is factory-built from new materials to be fully code compliant as a residential unit. They are transported to the site and rapidly lifted into place. In fact, OneBuild recently assembled a 49-unit apartment building near MRSC's offices in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood in about 36 hours.

CHA and OneBuild believe this project will show how any community of any size or shape can adapt this type of construction to meet the needs of people who are homeless.

For a community facing a crisis in homelessness or housing affordability, this demonstration project may provide a new option. For rapid deployment, lower cost, extreme flexibility, reusability, and scalability, steel-frame modular construction is gaining an opportunity for a real-world demonstration thanks to the energy and commitment of the Compass Housing Authority, OneBuild, and the Paul G. Allen Foundation.

## **Resources**

### **Compass Crossing**

[www.compasshousingalliance.org](http://www.compasshousingalliance.org)

### **OneBuild, Dale Sperling**

[www.onebuildinc.com](http://www.onebuildinc.com)



# Emergency rental assistance programs: A strategy for preventing homelessness

Emergency rental assistance prevents homelessness and helps residents avert eviction. In addition to providing funds to address their immediate housing crisis, such programs also provide other support services to promote long term stability.

Typically, these programs provide short-term (one to three months) or medium-term (up to six months) rental assistance for households with incomes up to 50 percent of Area Median Income (AMI), who are at imminent risk of homelessness or who have recently become homeless.

Individuals and families fall into housing crises and seek assistance for many reasons. Some of the most common are job loss, an unforeseen reduction in work hours, a medical emergency or disabling condition, limited income coupled with a rent increase, or the cessation of refugee resettlement assistance.

Rental assistance funds are used for immediate help with current or late rent, utility arrears, and legal or interpretation fees needed to stop an eviction action. Funds may also be used for credit and background checks needed to secure alternate stable housing, as well as security and utility deposits and moving costs.

In addition to receiving financial assistance, program participants may receive or be required to participate in services such as landlord negotiations, job search assistance, money management coaching, and help with goal setting.

Seattle has provided funding for its Homelessness Prevention Program with money raised with its Housing Levy authorized by RCW 84.52.105 and passed by the voters in 2009. Other communities appear to rely almost exclusively on the nonprofit sector.

## Resources

### Rental Assistance - Housing

[www.seattle.gov](http://www.seattle.gov)

### Homelessness and Family Stability - Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

[www.gatesfoundation.org](http://www.gatesfoundation.org)

### ARCH Housing - Other rental resources

[www.archhousing.org](http://www.archhousing.org)

### Prevention and Diversion Toolkit

[www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org)

### Spokane County Homeless Prevention

[www.snapwa.org](http://www.snapwa.org)



# Long-term “master leasing” helps provide homeless housing

Established in 1998, San Francisco’s Master Leasing Program acquires sites, mainly single occupancy hotels, under long-term leases with building owners to provide housing for people who are homeless. The building owner retains responsibility only for large capital improvements after the lease is signed. The sites are managed by nonprofit organizations that provide property management and supportive services on site. Building owners often renovate residential and common areas prior to lease signing.

While many nonprofits have adopted similar master leasing programs, only a few cities throughout the country have.

San Francisco’s successful program signs long-term leases with owners to provide permanent supportive housing for homeless adults. Its program is a Housing First model; that is, it provides housing immediately to homeless people regardless of their mental health or substance abuse status. This

approach is based on the idea that in order for people to achieve stability and recovery, they must first have a safe, stable home and access to the mental health, addiction treatment, and other services they need. Most agree that it is very difficult to address a mental health or chemical dependency issue while sleeping on the street. (See also *The Housing First model* on p. 9)

The benefits of master leasing are the ability to bring units online rapidly, and the reliance on private capital for upfront renovation costs. In addition, the renovated buildings, combined with on-site services, stabilize properties that have often been problematic for the surrounding neighborhood.

San Francisco funds this program through its general fund and Human Services Care Fund. In fiscal year 2013-14 the fund had a budget of \$14 million.

## Resources

**City of San Francisco**  
**Department of Public Health,**  
**Housing and Urban Health**  
[www.sfdph.org](http://www.sfdph.org)



# The Housing First model

The central goal of the Housing First approach is to provide permanent, affordable housing. By providing housing assistance, case management, and supportive services after an individual or family is housed, communities can significantly reduce the time people experience homelessness and prevent further episodes of homelessness.

Housing First is an approach used for both homeless families and individuals, and for people who are chronically homeless. For the chronically homeless, this is also referred to as “low barrier” housing because typically there are no preconditions that the participant be clean and sober to obtain housing. Participants are housed with access to services such as mental health and addiction on-site or nearby, but are not required to use the services.

The Housing First approach provides homeless people with housing quickly, without preconditions such as requiring that they become clean and sober first.

Generally, Housing First programs share these elements:

- A focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible;
- A commitment to permanent rather than temporary or transitional housing;
- Provision of social and health services following a housing placement;
- Services are tailored to each individual’s or family’s needs; and
- Housing is not contingent on participation in services or treatment; the only requirement is that participants comply with a standard lease agreement, and services are intended to help them do so successfully.

A central tenet of the Housing First approach is that social services enhance individual and family well-being are more effective when people are in their own home than when they are living with the extreme stress of homelessness.

While there are a wide variety of program models, all Housing First programs typically include:

- Assessment-based targeting of Housing First services;
- Assistance locating rental housing, relationship development with private market landlords, and lease negotiation;
- Housing assistance ranging from security deposit and one month’s rent to provision of a long-term housing subsidy;
- A housing placement that is not time-limited; and
- Case management to coordinate the services that follow a housing placement.

The Housing First model has been shown to reduce public costs of homelessness such as use of emergency rooms, police services, courts and jails, and public sanitation. The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that each homeless person costs between \$30,000 and \$50,000 per year in such costs.

The cost to provide permanent housing and support services to help people stay housed is approximately \$20,000 per year.

The stable living environment facilitates effective, and/or more cost effective treatment than emergency rooms and incarceration.

Program models vary depending on the client population, the availability of affordable rental housing, and/or housing subsidies and services. Housing First programs often reflect the needs and preferences of each community, further contributing to the diversity of models.

## **Resources**

### **Seattle's 1811 Eastlake project puts housing first**

[www.cartercenter.org](http://www.cartercenter.org)

### **TED talk by Dr. Sam Tsemberis, "Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Transforming Lives, and Changing Communities" (2012)**

[www.ted.org](http://www.ted.org)

### **Housing First and Emergency Medical Services**

[www.mhsa.net](http://www.mhsa.net)



# Tiny house villages: Quixote Village and Emerald Village

Tiny house villages offer a lower-cost way to provide safe housing, and the benefits of community living and peer support for people recovering from homelessness.

The term “tiny house” covers a wide range of structures and program models. Some are permanent structures with heat, plumbing, and other amenities that will last for many decades; others are less expensive, impermanent, and unheated and unplumbed. Village program models also vary.

## **Quixote Village**

Located on a two-acre site in Olympia, Washington, Quixote Village consists of 30 cottages wrapped around a central open space, and a 2,640 square foot community building that includes a communal kitchen, dining and living room, showers, laundry facilities, and staff offices. The village provides permanent supportive housing for homeless adults, including people suffering from mental illness, people with physical disabilities, and people recovering from addiction.

Financing for the program’s development was provided by:

- \$1.5 million in the state capital budget, which came through the state Department of Commerce’s Housing Trust Fund;
- \$699,000 from federal Community Development Block Grant funding that came through Thurston County and the City of Olympia;
- \$170,000 in Thurston County funding from document recording fees; and
- \$215,000 in community donations, including the Nisqually Tribe, the Chehalis Tribe, the Boeing Employees’ Fund, and individual donors.

The total cost of the village was just over \$3 million or about \$100,000 per unit. The village meets the state’s green building code and all local building codes.

The Village has two on-site, fulltime staff: a program manager and a social worker. Mental health services are also offered onsite. There is also a Resident Council, which helps govern the village and coordinates community holiday parties, barbecues and other events.

## **Emerald Village**

Emerald Village in Eugene, Oregon, will represent a fresh approach to affordable housing. It will be a new and improved iteration of Opportunity Village, which has existed in Eugene, Oregon since 2013, and featured shed-type structures.

Emerald Village will be a more sustainable place to transition to from less permanent shelter such as encampments or smaller shed-type structures. The vision for this next village is to provide permanent, low-cost housing for people with limited incomes. Funding to build the tiny house community is being raised through private donations and grants.

Local architects and builders have gathered to form 13 teams, each donating their time and expertise to design and build one of the tiny homes at Emerald Village. Teams were limited to a 250-square-foot footprint and \$15,000 in materials (retail value). Other design parameters were kept to a minimum to demonstrate a variety of compact design and construction approaches.

Each of the homes is being designed to meet the building code’s definition of a “permanent dwelling” – including sleeping and living areas, a kitchenette, and bathroom contained within 160-288 square feet.

The individual houses will be supported by common facilities that include a community gathering area, kitchen, laundry, restroom, tool storage, and office.

Residents will pay \$250-350/month to live at Emerald Village, allowing the community to be financially self-sustaining once built. This provides a new, affordable housing option to someone with part-time work or fixed income. These are people who have been priced out of the housing market.

Unlike most affordable housing projects, residents of Emerald Village will not simply be renters; they will be members of a housing cooperative with an ownership share of the village – enabling them to create a modest asset that can be cashed out, if and when they move out. Residents will also share responsibility for upkeep of the village, and will have a voice in shaping how their housing is operated and managed through a democratic process.

By combining the benefits of cooperative housing with safe, livable, and cost-effective tiny houses, Emerald Village offers an accessible and sustainable response to our nation's current housing affordability crisis.

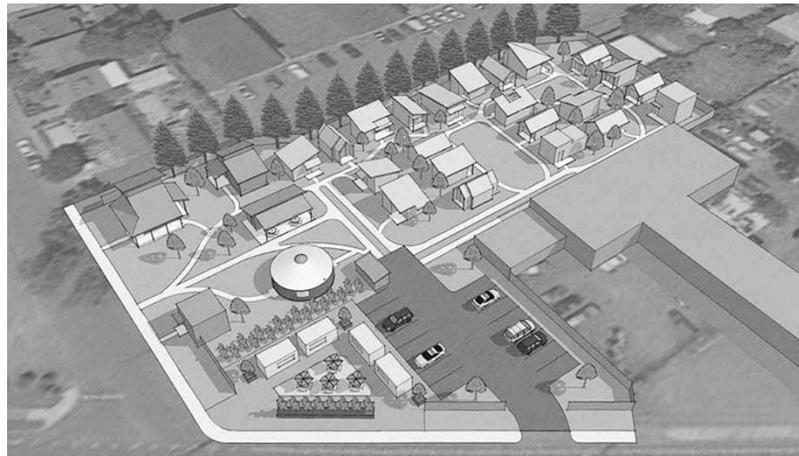
## Resources

### Quixote Village

[www.quixotevillage.com](http://www.quixotevillage.com)

### Emerald Village Eugene

[www.squareonevillages.org](http://www.squareonevillages.org)



Rendering of Emerald Village



# Local governments' winter shelter programs

While local governments in Washington work to develop long-term solutions to homelessness, they must also respond to immediate threats to life and safety that arise when temperatures fall to freezing or below. Some communities have developed winter weather shelter programs to address this need.

Winter weather shelter programs can take many forms, but they often involve a partnership with a local faith-based or other nonprofit organizations for the use of private facilities. While it is possible for a city or county to use its own facilities for this purpose, the logistical challenges – overnight staffing, meal preparation, scheduling of multipurpose facilities, insurance, and other similar issues – can make this option complicated to implement.

## **Kent partners with local church**

The City of Kent partners with a local church to operate a cold weather shelter during specific, cold-weather events.

Following a particularly cold winter in 2008-09, Kent community leaders and members of a local, faith-based organization developed a winter weather shelter program to provide temporary housing at a local church during severe, cold-weather events. Under the terms of the service agreement, the shelter can be activated by the city's Housing and Human Services Manager between the months of November and March when "temperatures fall below 32 degrees for 24 or more consecutive hours and/or snow accumulation exceeding or expected to exceed three inches in depth and/or other conditions deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to life or health of homeless persons" occur.

The city announces shelter activation by emailing community organizations, including the police, fire, and parks departments, local schools, and others, and by posting signs and posters at various community locations. A YouTube video, produced by the Kent Housing and Human Services Department, describes how the shelter program works.

The program gives priority to homeless families with children (living on the street or in vehicles) but also provides space for single women and men. The shelter is open daily from 9 pm to 7 am while severe weather conditions exist.

Shelter staffing is provided by church volunteers. The volunteers prepare the facility, greet guests, conduct safety screenings, prepare meals, and provide overnight supervision. To address security issues, the police department is notified when the shelter is activated and staff are instructed to call 911 if an emergency situation occurs. The church group also provides some staff trained to assist people in crisis. The church carries insurance coverage based on the terms of the service contract with the city.

## **Multi-jurisdiction model serves King County’s Eastside**

The cities of Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland, Issaquah, and Sammamish collaborate to provide east King County with three “low barrier” (shelters with limited entry requirements are called “low-barrier”) shelters:

- Catholic Community Services (for families);
- Sophia Way (for single women); and
- Congregations for the Homeless (for single men).

The City of Bellevue takes the lead in contracting with the shelter organizations and each of the participating cities pays a share of the cost. Under the terms of the contract, shelter services are provided during a fixed period (November–April) as opposed to being triggered by a particular, cold-weather event.

## **Resources**

**Catholic Community Services** (families)

[www.ccsww.org](http://www.ccsww.org)

**Sophia Way** (single women)

[www.sophiaway.org](http://www.sophiaway.org)

**Congregations for the Homeless** (single men)

[www.cfhomeless.org](http://www.cfhomeless.org)

**Kent’s Severe Weather Shelter Operations Guide**

[www.mrsc.org](http://www.mrsc.org)

# Revising city regulations to encourage accessory dwelling units

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) have been around for decades. In many parts of Washington State, the concept is accepted and local governments have revised their regulations to accommodate such housing. Even so, the number of ADUs created in accordance with local standards has remained relatively low, due in part to the difficulty in meeting those regulations and the associated costs. In response, a few local governments are relooking at their standards and discussing how to make them easier to meet. The potential easing of existing ADU regulations, however, is causing neighborhood homeowners to take notice.

## What is an accessory dwelling unit (ADU)?

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a small, self-contained residential unit located on the same lot as an existing single-family home. They are sometimes referred to as "mother-in-law apartments." An ADU has all the basic facilities needed for day-to-day living independent of the main home, such as a kitchen, sleeping area, and a bathroom.

There are two types of ADUs:

1. **Attached ADU**, which may be created as either:
  - a. A separate unit within an existing home (such as in an attic or basement); or
  - b. An addition to the home (such as a separate apartment unit with its own entrance).
2. **Detached ADU**, created in a separate structure on the lot (such as a converted garage or a new "backyard cottage").

## Reasons for allowing ADUs

State law (RCW 43.63A.215 and RCW 36.70A.400) requires that certain cities and counties adopt ordinances to encourage the development of ADUs in single-family zones, by incorporating the model ordinance recommendations prepared by the Washington Department of Commerce. In addition to just meeting a statutory mandate, however, ADUs have also helped local jurisdictions meet their Growth Management Act goals to encourage affordable housing and provide a variety of housing densities and types, while still preserving the character of single-family neighborhoods. From a planning perspective, it is considered by many to be a "kinder and gentler" method for accommodating population growth in a community, as compared to upzoning land to do so.

## Standard ADU regulations

Most local ADU regulations have standards to address the following issues:

- Maximum unit size
- Owner-occupancy
- Dedicated off-street parking
- Attached ADUs only
- Maximum number of dwelling units on one lot
- Separate entrances/Only one visible from the street
- Other design standards (especially for detached ADUs) for such items as roof pitch, window style, and exterior material
- Maximum number of occupants
- Minimum lot size
- Building code and other "life/safety" requirements



## Communities starting to reconsider ADU requirements

Some local governments in Washington State and elsewhere are reexamining their “standard” ADU requirements and questioning the rationale behind them, especially given the low production rate of new accessory dwelling units. As a result, some communities are considering changes to ADU regulations, such as:

- **Unit size:** Most current ADU standards set a maximum size (for example, 800 square feet), but some communities are considering an increase to their limit to provide more flexibility.
- **On-site parking:** Some local governments are looking at a reduction or elimination of standards requiring on-site parking spaces for the ADU’s occupants, especially in areas where there is adequate on-street parking. Such a change may face stronger opposition in neighborhood where street parking is at a premium.
- **Detached ADUs:** Most codes only allow attached ADUs, but more communities are expanding regulations to permit detached ADUs (which are usually required to be placed in the back half of a residential lot). Even if allowed, the high cost of constructing “backyard cottages” may limit the number that actually get built.

- **Owner-occupancy:** Most codes require that the property owner needs to occupy either the primary or accessory unit, but some communities (such as Seattle) are considering removing this requirement.
- **Allowing more than two dwelling units:** A “cutting edge” regulatory change is to increase the maximum number of dwelling units on a single family lot to three (by allowing one primary dwelling unit, one attached ADU, and one detached ADU). In Seattle, the City Council is currently considering proposed code revisions that would include an increase to three units on one lot.

Discussion about these types of changes has caused anxiety for some homeowners, who are concerned about the impacts on neighborhood character and property values. On the other side are affordable housing advocates who consider changing existing regulations as a way to effectively increase the number of legal ADUs.

Regardless of how local governments decide to regulate them, ADUs may be a viable approach to address a community’s growth and affordable housing policies in a manner that is acceptable to residents (especially if they

consider the alternatives). Just be sure regulations and development review process aren’t so burdensome that property owners end up not creating these dwelling units or building an ADU without obtaining the required permits.

### Resources

#### Accessory Dwellings website

[www.accessorydwellings.org](http://www.accessorydwellings.org)

#### MRSC’s Accessory Dwelling Units: Issues & Options publication

[www.mrsc.org](http://www.mrsc.org)

#### MRSC’s Accessory Dwelling Units and Affordable Housing webpages

[www.mrsc.org](http://www.mrsc.org)



# A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH): 15 cities and a county working together

A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH) is a voluntary consortium of 15 cities in east King County and the county government itself. Originally created in 1992 following recommendations of a citizen's commission, ARCH provides a way for member cities to support and supplement internal city capacity for capital construction, and development and administration of regulatory and incentive programs for affordable housing.

ARCH's administrative budget is funded by its member cities, partially but not entirely based on a per capita model. The board consists of the chief executive officers of member cities. ARCH does not replace internal local government staff, but provides a shared staff resource to assist in local housing activities. ARCH staff have played a supportive role for various city housing related efforts including preparing local planning documents such as Housing Elements, and developing specific initiatives such as accessory dwelling units, multifamily tax exemptions, and surplus land programs. ARCH staff also assist with administering local programs and provide staffing for community meetings.

On the capital side, ARCH helps cities coordinate resources they allocate for affordable housing within the member cities. Cities are willing to co-fund projects through grants and loans with the long term goal of creating affordable housing throughout east King County that serve a range of needs. ARCH also provide ongoing monitoring of housing funded by cities.

While a coalition like ARCH does not solve affordable housing problems by itself, it provides a good way to leverage resources and share specialized expertise.

## Resources

**A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH) Homepage**

[www.archhousing.org](http://www.archhousing.org)





# City of Bellingham housing levy

The Bellingham housing levy was approved by the voters in 2012, and imposes a tax of 36 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, generating \$21 million over seven years for the Bellingham Home Fund. The Bellingham Home Fund provides safe, affordable homes and supportive services to seniors on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, veterans, and low-income families. An Administrative and Financial Plan approved by the Bellingham City Council guides the use of the funds.

In 1995, the Washington State Legislature enacted RCW 84.52.105, which authorizes cities, counties and towns to impose an additional regular property tax levy of up to 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value of property for up to ten consecutive years. The ability to propose a levy under this statute requires a city, county or town to declare an emergency with respect to the availability of affordable housing.

## Rental and transitional housing

The Bellingham Home Fund supports the development of new rental housing units for households that earn less than half the area's median income. Funds have been used for critical repairs, weatherization and accessibility.

## Homeownership

Since 2002, the City of Bellingham has partnered with the Kulshan Community Land Trust and, more recently, with the Washington State Housing Finance Commission to help with down payment and closing costs for low income households. Since 1977, the city has offered financial assistance to low-income homeowners to repair their homes. In 2013, the Bellingham Home Fund allowed the city to support the Opportunity Council (a private, nonprofit Community Action Agency serving homeless and low-income families and individuals) expansion of its services to repair and weatherize owner-occupied manufactured homes.

## Rental assistance and services

Bellingham allocates the Home Fund, federal HUD funds, and city funds to support housing and social services for low-income people in the community. These funds also support rent subsidies and emergency winter shelter.

Some of the Home Fund's major initiatives include:

- Homeless Outreach Team (Whatcom Homeless Service Center)
- Intensive Case Management (Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement)
- Housing Services (Lydia Place, YWCA, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services, Northwest Youth Services, Opportunity Council, and Catholic Community Services)

## Resources

**City of Bellingham, Affordable Housing Funding and Incentives**

[www.cob.org](http://www.cob.org)



# Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are nonprofit organizations that provide affordable homeownership by placing land in a trust so that home buyers pay only for the cost of the structure. The CLT home buyers lease the land from the nonprofit for a modest fee.

There are currently over 240 CLTs in 38 states. Thirty CLTs have been established in the Pacific Northwest, with 19 in Washington. CLTs have proven to be a very effective model in Seattle, Bellingham, Spokane, Portland, and other communities around the country.

A CLT must have property in order to offer building sites, either in the form of land for construction or existing homes. Land acquisition may be from available public property, or purchased with funds from grants, special levies or donations.

CLTs make home ownership more attainable for low-income families by removing the cost of land from the purchase. In a “hot” housing market, the increasing land value is a substantial part of the cost of a home; by removing that cost, the CLT is able to sell the homes at below-market rates.

The housing remains permanently affordable by limiting equity gains, which preserves the home’s affordability for future owners. In exchange for purchasing a home at well below market rate, CLT homeowners agree to a limit on the amount of equity they can realize if they sell the home in the future. An agreed-upon formula caps their equity growth at a reasonable rate. Even if property values in the area skyrocket, the home remains comparatively affordable forever.

CLT homeowners may still build equity, within the agreed limits, and use that equity to move up the economic ladder.

A CLT balances the multiple goals of asset-building for low- and moderate-income households, preservation of affordability over time, and the protection of neighborhood vitality. CLTs have an established track record of very low default rates. In 2008, CLTs had a foreclosure rate of 0.52 percent nationally, compared to over 3.3 percent for conventional homebuyers.

Often, a portion of CLT board seats are reserved for homeowners. In the Spokane CLT, for example, homeownership includes membership in the organization. One-third of the board of directors are homeowners, joining local housing advocates, city officials, and other interested community members.

CLT homeowners may make further improvements to their houses just as any homeowner would. Homeowners reap all the tax benefits of homeownership and can leave the home to their heirs or anyone else they designate.

Community Land Trust homes may include both discrete developments in a neighborhood and scattered site programs where homeowners find a home they wish to purchase, and the property is brought into the CLT as part of the purchase process.

## Resources

### **Welcome – Homestead CLT – Seattle**

[www.homesteadclt.org](http://www.homesteadclt.org)

### **Kulshan CLT – a community land trust – Bellingham**

[www.kulshanclt.org](http://www.kulshanclt.org)

### **Spokane Community Land Trust**

[www.spokaneclt.weebly.com](http://www.spokaneclt.weebly.com)

### **Northwest Community Land Trust Coalition**

[www.nwcltc.org](http://www.nwcltc.org)

### **National Community Land Trust Network**

[www.cltnetwork.org](http://www.cltnetwork.org)



# Inclusionary zoning: Mandatory programs

One method for addressing the affordable housing problem is a regulatory tool called “inclusionary zoning.” Inclusionary zoning requires affordable units to be included within new residential development projects, or payment for construction of such units elsewhere in the community.

There are two basic types of inclusionary zoning: voluntary and mandatory.

Under a voluntary program, it is up to the developer to decide whether or not to use various incentives or bonuses in exchange for providing a specified number of affordable units. However, such programs are not used very often, with developers usually opting to choose the simpler path of building only market-rate housing.

Conversely, a mandatory program requires the construction of a minimum number of affordable units or an “in lieu of” payment. Communities with a mandatory program usually provide an additional density bonus if the number of affordable dwelling units goes beyond the mandated minimum. This article focuses primarily on mandatory programs.

## Who uses inclusionary zoning

More than 500 cities in the U.S. use inclusionary zoning, including Boston, Denver, New Orleans, Portland, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Diego, and Washington D.C. In Washington

State, there are a few cities that use inclusionary zoning, and more that are actively considering it.

Successful examples in Washington State are Redmond and Federal Way. Redmond’s affordable housing regulations, which have been in place since 1995, provide long-term affordable “contracts” on nearly 500 dwelling units. The City of Federal Way has also created a sizable amount of affordable units through its inclusionary zoning provisions.

## Elements of Inclusionary Zoning

Mandatory inclusionary zoning regulations usually specify the following:

- **Minimum quantity** of affordable units to be provided, which is usually a percentage of a development’s total number of dwelling units. For example, Redmond requires a minimum of ten percent, while Sammamish has a sliding scale, based on the affordability level of the provided housing units. Developers in Sammamish are also using the city’s affordable housing “bonus pool” to produce more market-rate and affordable dwelling units.
- **Targeted income range** of households to be served by the affordable units. For instance, Redmond’s target population is “those who make equal to or less

than 80 percent of the King County median household income adjusted for household size,” while Federal Way defines “rental affordable housing” as dwelling units affordable to those with incomes at or below 50 percent of King County’s median income.

- **Time period** within which the designated units must be maintained as affordable. For example, Issaquah requires those units to remain affordable for a minimum of 50 years.
- **Geographic scope** of such regulations. Inclusionary zoning is usually limited to designated areas such as a downtown or mixed use development areas, although they may be applied throughout your community. For example, Redmond includes its downtown and seven other neighborhoods, while Issaquah’s mandatory program is limited to the Central Issaquah Urban Core.

On a practical note, a local government should ensure that the increased development capacity resulting from an upzone will offset the added costs to the housing developer of providing the affordable units. Otherwise, neither the market-rate nor affordable housing units will be built.

## Pros and cons of inclusionary zoning

In an active housing market, inclusionary zoning results in the production of more affordable housing for low and moderate income residents. Inclusionary zoning can also result in buildings and neighborhoods that have a mix of income levels, without having to rely on taxpayer funds to provide them.

On the “con” side, it may be difficult to administer an inclusionary zoning program and monitor that the designated dwelling units remain affordable. Also, this type of regulation sometimes raises peoples’ concern about a change in community character. Finally, if your local housing market is not strong enough, developers may opt not to build any residential housing, which might then exacerbate the affordable housing issue.

## Legal basis for inclusionary zoning

State law (RCW 36.70A.540) provides authority for GMA cities and counties to establish mandatory requirements for the inclusion of affordable housing under certain circumstances. That

statute allows a GMA city or county to require a minimum number of affordable housing units that must be provided by all residential developments in areas where the city or county decides to increase residential capacity. Before establishing such a requirement, a city or county must determine that such a zone change would further local growth management and housing policies.

The pros and cons of inclusionary zoning should be carefully reviewed before implementing such a program. But, if your community has an affordable housing problem and strong demand for market-rate housing, it is a regulatory tool that should be considered.

## Resources

*The Ins and the Outs: A Policy Guide to Inclusionary and Bonus Housing Programs in Washington*

[www.mrsc.org](http://www.mrsc.org)

*Inclusionary Housing - Creating and Maintaining Equitable Communities (Report)*

[www.lincolninst.edu](http://www.lincolninst.edu)





# Multifamily tax exemption: An incentive to help create affordable housing

Washington cities with populations of 15,000 or more may establish a tax exemption program to stimulate the construction, rehabilitation, or conversion of existing structures to provide multifamily housing within city-designated areas, including affordable housing (see RCW 84.14).

Cities in "buildable lands" counties under RCW 36.70A.215, and the largest city in a Growth Management Act (GMA) county where no city has 15,000 or more residents may also utilize the tax exemption program.

When a project is approved under this program, the value of eligible multifamily housing improvements is exempted from property taxes for eight or 12 years. Land, existing improvements, and non-residential improvements are not exempt. Only projects with four or more units are eligible for either the eight or 12-year exemption. The eight-year tax exemption applies to market-rate housing, and the 12-year tax abatement is available if 20 percent of the project's units are affordable to families earning up to 115% of the area median income.

Only property owners who commit to renting or selling at least 20 percent of units as affordable housing for low and moderate income households are eligible for a 12-year exemption. The property must satisfy that commitment, and any additional affordability and income eligibility conditions adopted by the local government under this chapter.

If the property use changes before the applicable exemption ends, back taxes are recovered based on the difference between the taxes paid and the taxes that would have been paid without the tax exemption.

Several cities have adopted multifamily property tax exemption ordinances including Auburn, Bellevue, Everett, Renton, Spokane, Seattle, Bremerton, Wenatchee, Bellingham, Shoreline, Kent, Tacoma, Vancouver, and Lynnwood.

The Seattle Multifamily Tax Exemption program is applicable to new multifamily buildings that set aside 20-25 percent of the homes as income- and rent-restricted for 12 years. Currently approximately 130 properties are participating and an additional 90 are expected to begin leasing units between 2016 and 2018.

## Resources

### **Bellevue Multifamily Property Tax Exemption**

[www.bellevuewa.gov](http://www.bellevuewa.gov)

### **Bremerton Multifamily Property Tax Exemption Program**

[www.ci.bremerton.wa.us](http://www.ci.bremerton.wa.us)

### **Spokane Multiple Family Housing Property Tax Exemption Program**

[www.spokanecity.org](http://www.spokanecity.org)

### **Wenatchee Tax Exemption for Multifamily Housing**

[www.wenatcheewa.gov](http://www.wenatcheewa.gov)



# “Tiny homes” as permanent housing – zoning and code limitations

“Tiny homes” are all the rage these days. But if they are so popular, then why don't we see more tiny homes in our communities?

The simple answer is that zoning and building/construction regulations create significant barriers against them, especially if someone wants to live in a tiny home on a permanent basis.

## What is considered a “tiny home?”

For the purpose of this article, “tiny home” is defined as a small dwelling (500 square feet or less), with a kitchen and bathroom, mounted on wheels, and able to be pulled by a vehicle. A tiny home is not a “very small house” built on-site or a traditional recreational vehicle (RV). But, distinctions start to get a little murkier as you dive into the details.

## Zoning

Relevant state law and local regulations deal primarily with camper trailers and recreational vehicles (RV) that are used on a temporary basis, and not tiny homes on a chassis with wheels intended for permanent occupancy. Accordingly, most zoning codes treat such tiny homes as camper trailers or RVs, and usually allow them only for temporary, recreational

use in campgrounds, RV parks, and occasionally in mobile home parks.

If a local government wanted to allow permanent occupancy of “tiny homes” in residential zones as another housing option, it would be relatively straightforward (although not necessarily easy) to address the following issues within a community's zoning code.

- **Zones where allowed:** Local governments will need to decide where it wishes to allow tiny homes, which may depend on how they are defined in the zoning code. They could be defined either generally as a “single family dwelling unit” or specifically as a “tiny home” with a specific set of standards applied to them.
- **Standards applied to tiny homes:** If regulating tiny homes as single family dwelling units, then all the applicable zoning standards (such as density, minimum lot size, setbacks, and off-street parking requirements) should apply. If tiny homes are treated as a separate type of land use, then any exceptions to the previous sentence should be explicitly noted and included in your code.

- **Minimum dwelling unit size/occupancy:** The International Residential Code (IRC) requires every dwelling unit to have “at least one habitable room that shall have not less than 120 square feet (11 m<sup>2</sup>) of gross floor area,” but this standard should not be a problem in most cases, because a majority of tiny homes are larger than 120 square feet. Although uncommon, some local zoning codes have a minimum square foot requirement or a residential occupancy standard (such as at least X square feet of living area/occupant). If that is the case, a jurisdiction may need to revise that standard or create an exemption for tiny homes. However, private covenants with minimum size/occupancy requirements cannot be changed through zoning regulations.
- **Accessory dwelling units (ADU):** Some jurisdictions apparently are considering revising their codes to specifically allow a tiny house as an ADU. The City of Fresno, CA is one of the few cities that currently allows a tiny home to be used as an ADU.

A major issue is that most of the zoning provisions discussed above, however, pertain to a tiny home being treated as a permanent dwelling unit. And, therein, lies the dilemma.

## **Tiny homes as temporary housing vs. permanent dwelling units**

In Washington State, a tiny home with wheels and a chassis is actually called a Park Model Recreational Vehicle (PMRV) and is approved only for temporary/recreational use. A tiny home/PMRV with its wheels taken off and mounted on a foundation will still be viewed as a PMRV and its use will still be considered as “temporary/recreational” (and not approved as a permanent dwelling unit). Exceptions in state law (RCW 35.21.684 and RCW 36.01.225), however, allow a PMRV to be used as a residence if it is located in a mobile home park, hooked up to utilities, and meets the other requirements of the applicable law.

While some tiny home owners intend to use them only for temporary living purposes, others want to use them as permanent or long-term residences. In most cases, a tiny home/PMRV cannot be converted into a dwelling unit. The International Residential Code (IRC) addresses dwelling units and requires that “permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation” be provided in a dwelling, along with other requirements such as heating, mechanical and energy efficiency provisions. For example, PMRVs are only

required to meet minimal insulation requirements for floors, walls, and ceilings. In contrast, dwellings are held to a much more efficient and higher standard for insulation, which also provides greater energy sustainability.

For a tiny home to be approved as a dwelling unit:

- A person would need to submit engineered plans to the Factory Assembled Structure program of the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) for the construction of a “Modular Building” (or to the local building department for a site-built tiny house).
  - Those plans would be reviewed under the specific Washington State Administrative Code (WAC 296-150F) for conformance with the requirements of the IRC.
  - Once approved, the builder would request inspections during the construction process until final approval had been obtained.
  - After final approval, the L&I inspector would attach the “Modular Gold Label Insignia” to the unit and a notice would be sent to the local building department, letting them know that the Factory Assembled Modular Unit is being transported to the intended end user site.
- Permits from the local building department would be required, and they would need to approve the foundation and installation of the tiny home.
  - The local jurisdiction will typically instruct the owner of the modular unit to provide design engineering for foundation and anchoring attachments from a licensed engineer or require a L&I-approved general design for attaching the tiny home structure to a permanent foundation.

All utilities (water, sewer, and electric) for a permanent tiny home would need to be connected in the same manner as a typical single family house; use of extension cords and garden hoses would not be allowed.

Tiny homes are likely to remain popular for many years to come. There are many barriers related to their use as a primary residence, both from a construction standards and zoning perspective. Current requirements make it difficult for tiny homes to become dwelling units, and all but impossible for the “do-it-yourselfer” to build a tiny home and live in it permanently.

## Resources

### American Tiny House Association's "Zoning" webpage

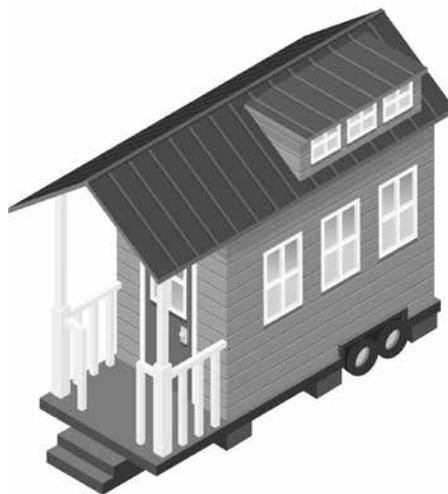
[www.americantinyhouseassociation.org](http://www.americantinyhouseassociation.org)

### Washington L&I's "Modular and Other Manufactured Structures website"

[www.lni.wa.gov](http://www.lni.wa.gov)

### "Tiny Houses, and the Not-So-Tiny Questions They Raise"

Report by Donald Elliott, FAICP, and Peter Sullivan, AICP, *Zoning Practice*, Vol. 32, No. 11 (November 2015)





# Rental housing inspection programs

Several cities have adopted rental housing safety programs in an effort to ensure that rental units offered to tenants are safe. The rental housing safety program protects low income residents by requiring that property owners meet health and safety standards in order to rent out their units.

RCW 59.18.125 was added to the state's Landlord Tenant Act (RCW 59.18) in 2010. The law authorizes a municipality to require certificates of inspection from landlords, and requires that cities adopting a rental inspection/licensing ordinance after June 10, 2010 follow the regulations provided in the statute.

In 2007, before this law was adopted, the State Supreme Court upheld a City of Pasco ordinance that required landlords to be licensed by the city, make inspections of their rental units, and furnish the city with a certificate of inspection verifying that their units met applicable building codes. A key element in the court's decision in *City of Pasco v. Shaw* was that the inspections could be performed by a private inspector of the property owner's choosing. This provision is also a feature of RCW 59.18.125.

## Resources

### **Lakewood Rental Housing Safety Program**

[www.cityoflakewood.us](http://www.cityoflakewood.us)

### **Tacoma Municipal Code, Title 6, Ch. 6B.165**

[www.cityoftacoma.org](http://www.cityoftacoma.org)

### **Tukwila Municipal Code, Ch. 5.06**

[www.tukwilawa.gov](http://www.tukwilawa.gov)



# Vancouver's tenant protection ordinances

In early 2015, the Vancouver City Council created the Affordable Housing Task Force to advise city policy makers on potential solutions to the problems of increased homelessness and the lack of affordable housing. The task force recommended a number of measures to protect vulnerable renters and increase the supply of affordable housing.

At the time of the task force's creation, the city's vacancy rate was under two percent, down from nearly four percent in 2010. The task force noted that renters are having a difficult time securing housing due to the market's rapid price increases and low vacancy rates. As a result of the task force's work, the city enacted three ordinances to protect renters and promote housing stability:

## **45-day Notice of Rent Increase – VMC 4.46**

Any rental agreement for a residential unit in the City of Vancouver must include a provision that requires a 45-day written notice to a tenant when their housing costs are increased by more than ten percent. Housing costs include the basic rent and any periodic fees paid to the landlord by the tenant, but do not include utility charges that are based on usage and that the tenant has agreed to pay in the rental agreement.

## **60-day Notice to Vacate – VMC 8.47**

An affirmative defense is created for tenants who are not provided a required 60-day "no cause" eviction notice from a unit. This only applies to landlords who own five or more rental units. Other notices within the state's Residential Landlord Tenant Act (RCW 59.18) remain available to landlords, including the three-day notice to pay or vacate and the ten-day notice to comply with a rental agreement or vacate.

## **Source of Income Protection – VMC 8.45**

This ordinance prohibits landlords from refusing to rent to a tenant based solely on the source of that tenant's income. Sources of income include but are not limited to income from Social Security, rental subsidies from state and federal sources, and nonprofit administered benefit programs.

## **Resources**

**City of Vancouver Affordable Housing Task Force**

[www.cityofvancouver.us](http://www.cityofvancouver.us)

Innovative collaboration



# Addressing chronic homelessness in Everett with CHART & Housing First

Everett's Safe Streets Plan, which is being championed by Mayor Ray Stephanson, is focused on solving chronic homelessness through a coordinated effort among all the agencies and departments that deal with chronically homeless people every day.

Some chronically homeless people with mental illness, addictions, and other disabilities are heavy users of emergency rooms, police services, and the criminal justice system – and they often cycle through these services and back onto the streets. To address this problem, many cities are exploring ways to divert people from this expensive and unproductive cycle.

Everett created CHART (CHronic-Utilizer Alternative Response Team), a group consisting of criminal justice, emergency response, and research partners from the Everett Police Department, Everett Fire Department, Snohomish County Department of Human Services, Snohomish County Jail, Everett City Attorney's Office, and Providence Regional Medical Center Everett. A specialized CHART team is formed to problem-solve more permanent solutions – including housing – for people who are caught in this cycle.

A customized team is convened to deal with each individual. Teams may include addiction treatment providers, public defenders, social workers, housing providers, and/or medical and mental health professionals. This strategy is expected to result in better outcomes for participants, and to reduce the impact and expense of "frequent fliers." Similar strategies have been successful in other communities.

Inspired by a 2015 presentation on Utah's housing first policy, Mayor Stephanson has already announced Everett's first group of homeless individuals selected for housing.

Together, they accounted for hundreds of contacts with first responders and the criminal justice system over the past two years. All suffer from mental health and substance-abuse disorders, and each has been homeless for extended periods of time.

## Resources

**City of Everett CHART webpage**

[www.everettwa.gov](http://www.everettwa.gov)

**Housing First** - Housing First: Sam Tsemberis, TED Talk





# Lakewood nonprofits & government tackle affordability and homelessness together

Pierce County's annual 2016 Point-in-Time Count revealed that there were 1,762 people currently experiencing homelessness in Pierce County. The number of people in shelters and on the streets had increased by 524 countywide since 2015.

Individuals reporting either Lakewood or Tacoma/Lakewood as their location during the count made up six percent of the county's unsheltered population and 15 percent of those residing in shelters.

The City of Lakewood adopted a multifaceted approach to addressing both housing affordability and homelessness in the community. One percent of the city's general fund is allocated to support human and social services annually, including housing assistance and housing relocation programs. The city has also tried other approaches that complement this budget allocation.

In partnership with Greater Lakes Mental Health, the city hired a mental health professional who is embedded with police officers to serve as a resource for those who are suffering from addiction or mental illness. A full-time officer now supports the Behavioral Health Contact Team (BHCT). Last year, they helped over 200 people by directing them to needed resources. These people would otherwise have been incarcerated or hospitalized. The city regularly shares their experience and knowledge gained through this program with other local cities interested in establishing similar programs for their communities.

Lakewood also partners with multiple local organizations to address homelessness and mental health, including Living Access Support Alliance (LASA), Habitat for Humanity, Western State Hospital, and the Tacoma Methadone Clinic. The city contributed almost \$1 million to LASA to support their new shelter, which opened in July 2015. In addition, the city helped

Habitat for Humanity fund construction of new houses for low-income, first-time home buyers. To date, the organization has built 21 units in the Tillicum neighborhood and another 12 are scheduled for construction. Habitat is also looking to add additional properties to its Tillicum portfolio.

The city is part of a consortium, called the Continuum of Care, with Pierce County and the City of Tacoma that qualifies for federal Community Development Block Grant dollars to support other programs to address homelessness countywide.

Another example of collaboration with Pierce County is shared use of document recording fee revenue, which supports affordable housing and homelessness programs. Funding is distributed by an oversight committee composed of members from the City of Tacoma, City of Lakewood, Pierce County, and other city and town representatives. An interlocal agreement governs the operations of this committee.

The Lakewood City Council adopted a Rental Housing Safety Program in 2016 in an effort to ensure the safety of city rental units. The Rental Housing Safety Program requires property owners to meet health and safety standards in order to rent out their units. (See more on *Rental housing inspection programs* on p. 26)

The City of Lakewood estimates that low-income housing accounts for over 65 percent of homes within Lakewood, making the city a cost-effective location for Pierce County to place individuals who participate in rental assistance programs. Lakewood is also home to

other low-income options including 28 mobile home parks (1,180 units) and 388 apartment complexes (11,200 units), the majority of which serve low-income residents. The city also hosts other low-income and transitional housing programs such as the Pierce County Housing Authority and units built using federal tax credits.

## Resources

### Pierce County Community Connections – Homeless Programs

[www.co.pierce.wa.us](http://www.co.pierce.wa.us)

### Access Point 4 Housing

[www.associatedministries.org](http://www.associatedministries.org)

### Living Access Support Alliance

[www.lasawa.org](http://www.lasawa.org)





# Wenatchee coordinates homeless programs for two counties

In 2006, Chelan County and Douglas County combined forces to reduce the prevalence of homelessness. They chose the City of Wenatchee to serve as the lead entity overseeing the development and administration of the counties' homeless plan.

The city manages the local and state homeless and housing funds on behalf of Chelan and Douglas counties through an interlocal agreement. The city also manages funds distributed through the Department of Commerce's Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). Wenatchee is not a provider of direct services, but instead sub-grants these funds out to local service providers.

The City of Wenatchee administers the homeless programs in compliance with the grant requirements and coordinates services among providers. The city is assisted in its work by a Homeless Steering Committee and a Homeless Task Force. The steering committee assists with policy oversight and funding decisions, and is composed of representatives from local governments, community organizations, business groups, the media, and citizens. The task force is composed of homeless service providers and other interested parties who coordinate how services work in the counties.

The city manages approximately \$1 million in grant money annually. The steering committee has a cash flow reserve balance of \$150,000 and an emergency reserve fund of \$100,000.

As a part of a recently updated five-year plan, the Chelan-Douglas County Program identified six priorities:

1. Focus on the chronically homeless;
2. Improve system responsiveness;
3. Increase the supply of and access to affordable housing;
4. Address youth homelessness;
5. Improve coordinated entry (a requirement that all counties have a single point of access for homeless services); and
6. Strengthen data collection.

To achieve those priorities, the city is responsible for the following tasks:

- Promote the development of affordable housing through land use and zoning policies;
- Preserve local rental stock through dedicated code compliance work;
- Provide trainings for service providers on fair housing rights, wrap around services, and responding to behavioral health crises; and
- Provide periodic information and updates on system performance and utilization.

In order to measure progress, the five-year plan also included numerous performance measures such as reduction in the number chronically homeless individuals, reduction in the length of stay in emergency shelters, increase in the Wenatchee valley rental vacancy rate, and full Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) utilization by services providers.

## Resources

### Chelan-Douglas Plan to End Homelessness

[www.wenatcheewa.gov](http://www.wenatcheewa.gov)





Association of Washington Cities  
1076 Franklin St. SE  
Olympia, Washington 98501-1346  
360.753.4137 or 1.800.562.8981

[awcnet.org](http://awcnet.org)



Municipal Research and Services Center  
2601 Fourth Ave., Suite 800  
Seattle, Washington 98121-1280  
206.625.1300 or 1.800.933.6772

[mrsc.org](http://mrsc.org)