A Roof Over Every Bed in King County:

Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness

Committee to End Homelessness in King County

During 2000-2001 St. Mark's Cathedral convened a community dialogue focused on the crisis of homelessness in our community. A feasibility committee was established to investigate the possibility of creating a region-wide response to homelessness. Through these efforts, the Committee to End Homelessness in King County was formed.

In 2002, eight organizations, coalitions, and local governments came together in a unified effort to provide the vision and leadership required to develop and implement a plan to end homelessness in King County, Washington. Committee members and stakeholders in the planning process include homeless or formerly homeless youth and adults, faith communities, philanthropy, businesses, local governments, non-profit human service providers, non-profit housing developers, and advocates.

The eight founding organizations of the Committee to End Homelessness in King County are:

- Church Council of Greater Seattle

- City of Seattle

- Eastside Human Services Alliance

- King County

- North Urban Human Services Alliance

- Seattle-King County Coalition for the Homeless

- South King County Council of Human Services

- United Way of King County

The leadership and commitment of these entities is gratefully acknowledged.

The Committee to End Homelessness in King County is comprised of representatives from throughout the county. In addition, a number of organizations dedicated staff time and resources to support the efforts of the Committee. Committee members, staff circle, and advisors are listed in the following pages. In addition to those listed, many others participated in planning meetings or provided feedback. The continued participation of these individuals and organizations is essential to ensuring that *Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness* is successful.

Committee to End Homelessness in King County Members

Humberto Alvarez, Staff Circle Co-Chair
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Appointed by Seattle-King County
Coalition for the Homeless

Dan Brettler, Committee Vice Chair
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Companion Materials to *Our Community's Ten-Year Plan* are available. For more information, see: www.cehkc.org.

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- Factors that Create and Sustain Homelessness
- King County's Current Response to Homelessness: A Continuum of Care
- Glossary of Relevant Terms and Acronyms

Plan Structure and Content

Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness documents our commitment to ending homelessness in King County by 2014 and outlines strategies that will support this goal.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the impact of homelessness on our communities and the reasons we must work together to end homelessness.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the six principal actions proposed by the Committee to End Homelessness in King County to prevent homelessness, move homeless people quickly into housing, and sustain our progress over time. This chapter also includes the anticipated outcomes over ten years.

Chapter 3 provides an estimate of the number of homeless people in King County and an overview of key strategies for ending homelessness in each of the major subpopulations.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are organized around the three primary populations of people who experience homelessness in King County: single adults, families, and youth and young adults. These chapters describe the current circumstances and causes of homelessness, followed by additional recommended actions steps specific to each population.

The hallmark of this plan is the unprecedented coordinated approach to planning, funding, and delivering housing and services to people who experience homelessness throughout King County. Chapter 7 details a proposed leadership model, strategies for building political will and community support, measuring success, and reporting outcomes.

Upon release of this plan, the Committee to End Homelessness in King County will convene a Governing Board that will develop a detailed work plan that outlines specific first year activities and areas of focus, responsible entities, and initial measures of success. Yearly action plans will be developed and progress updates issued regularly.

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.

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 undercount homeless persons. The community will implement strategies to better identify the number of homeless persons in King County.

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.

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 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 these 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)**	• Creating the governance to implement and monitor the plan • Improving data collection methods, including monitoring the decline of homelessness among those disproportionately affected, including persons of color • Building the community-wide political will necessary to succeed in years 2 through 10	*By the end of 2005:* • 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)**	• Expanding 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 service systems to implement strategies to ensure successful reentry • Identifying and implementing strategies to address the disproportionate representation of people of color who are homeless • 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	*By the end of 2010:* • 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 these data to mark progress toward our goals • The disproportionate number of homeless persons from communities of color will be significantly reduced
6 – 9 **(2011-2013)**	• 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	*By the end of 2013:* • 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)**	• 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	*By the end of 2014:* • 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

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.

Chapter 1

We Must Act Now to End Homelessness

Homelessness as we know it today has been an issue for our community for nearly twenty-five years. Many point to a confluence of events in the late 70s and early 80s—recession, de-institutionalization of people who experience mental illness, and severe reductions in federal funding for housing—as being responsible for the way homelessness exists in our communities. Today, poverty, racism, and violence each significantly contribute to homelessness. Livable wage jobs are more and more difficult to secure and many working people struggle to achieve and maintain housing stability. People of color are disproportionately represented among homeless persons and are impacted by racism and discrimination that adversely affect access to and success in employment and housing. Family violence impacts as many as half of homeless women and children and many homeless youth and young adults. Today, homelessness has become part of our local and national landscape.

Homelessness Hurts. More than 8,000 people experience homelessness on any given night in the rural towns, suburban cities, and urban centers of King County, and many more experience homelessness over the course of a year. In 2003 alone, 42 people died out-of-doors in our county while homeless. They died young, at an average age of 47. It is not acceptable to have people dying on the streets simply because they are poor and lack the basics of stable housing, food, and healthcare.

~

"Nothing felt so good as the first time I walked into my new apartment and locked the door behind me. I didn't know what a relief that would be."

Formerly Homeless Person

~

Homelessness Costs. Homelessness costs in other ways, as well. Each year, millions of King County taxpayer dollars are spent caring for homeless people through our most expensive emergency services—911, hospital emergency rooms, jails, mental health hospitals, detoxification programs, child protective services, and more. Cost studies around the nation, however, have proven that these individuals and families can succeed in housing if they get appropriate support. Once housed, their use of emergency services declines sharply. And the bottom line—it is less expensive for society and better for the individual.

Ending Homelessness Requires Commitment. *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 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—young or old, living alone or with families, whether well or sick.

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.

Ending Homelessness Requires Time. 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 the time that affordable permanent housing is available to all.

Further, we begin this work at a time when homeless counts have been steadily rising, when the federal and state governments are cutting housing and social supports, when the healthcare system is in crisis, when living-wage jobs are scarce, and when our nation is at war. We cannot and should not deny these dynamics, for until they change it will be daunting to stem the tide of people falling into homelessness. However, there is substantial work that can and must be done *today* to change the systems and resources in our hands *today*. In doing that work, we will create the proof, the foundation, and the will to eventually stem that tide into homelessness.

Ending Homelessness Begins with Prevention. Homelessness does not occur to a unique group or class of people. Homelessness is simply a symptom of people with a wide range of challenges and characteristics who happen to share the problem of lacking a permanent residence. There is not a "one size fits all" solution for homeless people. One of the most significant changes we seek to make through this plan is to better align our support systems to match the level and type of assistance to the distinct needs of people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. A key distinction is between people who face short-term, unanticipated hardship that leads to homelessness and people who have long-term disabilities or chronic health issues that require ongoing support to maintain stability and a productive life.

People who experience episodic unanticipated economic, health, family or other crises that lead to a loss of housing—including domestic violence—may need shelter and crisis-oriented support, but the goal should be to help people secure housing again as quickly as possible, with wrap-around services as needed. For those with serious disabilities or chronic health problems, however, their needs are not unanticipated. It is not desirable for them to have to pass through—or experience long-term—homelessness in order to obtain essential services. A substantial body of research documents both the high costs to taxpayers when such costly services as emergency rooms, medical and mental health hospitals, jails and prisons are utilized by chronically homeless, seriously disabled people because they do not have stable housing, and the substantial savings that are recognized through providing modest housing with appropriate support services.

Many of those who are homeless or are staying in shelters were discharged from jail and prison or have aged out of foster care, and there are high personal and financial costs associated with discharging people into homelessness rather than directly into an appropriate supportive housing option. However, timelines for successfully placing people into housing vary, and it can be challenging to find appropriate housing in a short timeframe. It is important that service systems be able to develop and enhance connections with appropriate supportive housing rather than discharge people into homelessness upon release.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness has called this strategy to end homelessness "closing the front door," referring to the benefits of drastically reducing the number of people who enter the homeless system. This will occur by providing adequate housing with appropriate supports for people with chronic illness or disabilities and by incorporating effective reentry options for people leaving institutions.

Homelessness Ends Through Community-wide Efforts. King County has a long tradition of motivated community members taking individual and collective action to remedy social injustices and offer charitable assistance. For example, faith communities throughout the county on a daily basis offer food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities to families and individuals in

need. Through the SHARE/WHEEL community's organizing efforts, homeless people have come together to create self-managed shelter and emergency responses. Many others, including business owners, nonprofit organizations, elected officials, and community members—who may not have been aware of the magnitude of the problem or have not yet set a high priority on ending homelessness—will be asked to join our countywide efforts.

Call to Action: A Vision for the Future

Community stakeholders are in agreement that the system of targeted homeless services in King County is generally strong, and that many effective and innovative programs are in place serving homeless children, families, youth, adults, and elders. Our communities have long histories of planning for and delivering a wealth of services to homeless and at-risk populations. However, this has not been enough to end homelessness. Our response has been insufficient in the face of the increasing numbers of people who experience homelessness in all parts of King County in recent years, the lack of affordable and appropriate housing, and the lack of coordination between multiple service systems.

To end homelessness, our communities must do more than simply expand a successful program or add new services to our existing continuum. We must radically change how we use current resources to prevent homelessness in the first place and to plan, finance, and deliver housing and support services to vulnerable populations 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 citizens, 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 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 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 these 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.

Chapter 2

Principal Actions to End Homelessness

Six principal actions have been identified as fundamental to ending homelessness and to the success of *Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness*:

A. Prevent Homelessness

B. Coordinate Leadership and Initiatives to End Homelessness Countywide

C. Build and Sustain the Political Will and Community Support to End Homelessness

D. Secure 9,500 Units of Housing for Homeless Persons

E. Deliver Flexible Culturally Competent Services to Support Stability and Independence

F. Measure Success and Reporting Outcomes

Each principal action is presented below and is supported by immediate, intermediate, and long-term activities that will advance our goal of ending homelessness. No ranking or hierarchy is implied by the order in which they are presented.

A. **Prevent Homelessness**

In the first year we will:

- Define and fully describe the characteristics that make individuals and families "at-risk" of homelessness

- Consult with nonprofit and for-profit housing developers and property managers in the county to better understand and quantify the level of interventions and support services that would help their tenants avoid eviction and remain stably housed, including one-time and short-term rent, mortgage, utility, and legal assistance; case management; childcare; and in-home supports

- Map the chief service systems: Identify where and how funds flow, review current eligibility and entry points, discover what works and does not work for homeless people in each system, identify disproportionate representation of people of color in these systems, get to know the key policymakers and administrators, and begin negotiations with at least two systems to better serve homeless people. The key systems with which we will work are:
  ◊ Income support programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other supplements, such as Food Stamps
  ◊ Medicaid—and other health services—including federally supported community health centers and health assistance through the Veteran's Health Administration
  ◊ Mental health and substance abuse services funded through various federal block grant programs to Washington State and distributed through the Regional Support Network
  ◊ Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs designed to provide training and secure employment for low-income, homeless, and disabled workers
  ◊ Housing subsidy programs, such as the federally funded Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8), HOME Investment Partnership, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), and public housing authority programs
  ◊ Other public systems, including public schools, child protective services, foster care, county jails, and state prisons.

In the first two years we will:

- Increase access to the available services and information needed to maintain housing stability for households in King County with extremely low incomes—more than 46,000 in 2004—that are at risk of homelessness; identify and reduce barriers to access experienced by households in need

- Assess the resources and capacity of current programs and systems to identify households at risk of homelessness, engage them, and provide them with the information and supports that they need to maintain housing stability; determine the level of resources needed by at-risk households

- Measure the effectiveness of homelessness prevention activities

- Link homeless planning and resource-allocation decisions with those efforts underway in our communities that are addressing predatory lending, domestic violence, youth aging out of foster care, AIDS housing, prison release, and others.

Within the first five years, our communities will:

- Secure commitments from the leaders of relevant service systems—including health, mental health, chemical dependency treatment, foster care, and criminal justice—to do the following:
  ◊ Conduct an analysis of current investments in services for people who experience homelessness in King County and create a plan for shifting resources, over time, from costly institutional supports to prevention services
  ◊ Partner with community-based providers to plan for and offer by 2009 the housing and service options needed to end the practice of discharging clients into homelessness
  ◊ Implement multi-disciplinary approaches to moving people quickly from shelters and the streets into permanent housing with on-site or linked services

- Expand the network of community-based human-service sites that serve persons who are at risk of homelessness so that all sub-regions of the county have local points of access that are linked to a common referral and information management system

- Utilize all appropriate data systems, including the Safe Harbors homeless management information system, to:
  ◊ Increase our understanding of how many people in King County fall into homelessness, where they live, what their household characteristics are, and why it happens
  ◊ Quantify the costs of delivering services to people who experience homelessness in King County and are frequent users of high-cost services and systems
  ◊ Establish baseline statistics to chart improvements over time through decreasing the number of households in King County that experience homelessness each year and reducing the time it takes to get them into stable, long-term housing

- Reduce chronic homelessness in our communities by 25%.

By 2014, in our county we will have:

- Created, nurtured, and fully implemented an intervention system focused on preventing homelessness and immediately housing those who do experience homelessness

- Bolstered the capacity 0f, and shared the responsibility with, service systems—including health, mental health, chemical dependency treatment, foster care, and criminal justice—to have in place prior to reentry a long-term housing plan for every client and to have secured an appropriate housing destination

- Decreased the number of chronically homeless on our streets by 98%

- Decreased 98% the number of youth, young adults, individuals, and families that lose their housing and experience "street" homelessness

- Converted 90% of homeless shelters and transitional housing into evidence-based models that combine emergency- and short-term interventions with permanent housing options with services available as needed.

B. **Coordinate Leadership and Initiatives to End Homelessness Countywide**

In the first year we will:

- Dedicate ourselves to ending rather than managing homelessness by combining our collective efforts in a new countywide leadership collaboration agreed to, and supported by, the eight founding members of the Committee to End Homelessness in King County and as many local municipalities, corporations and organizations as initially possible

- Convene a Governing Board of key community leaders—with representation from every sub-region of the county and the business sector—that is charged with providing the necessary leadership to change policy directions, set funding priorities, and promote systems changes and enhancements aimed at ending homelessness in a direct and cost-effective manner

- Support the work of the Governing Board and plan implementation by convening both a Consumer Advisory Board made up of homeless and formerly homeless persons and an Interagency Council that includes funders and key players in housing and support service delivery

- Through the Consumer Advisory Board, and in all aspects of policy development and priority setting, ensure an active role for homeless and formerly homeless persons, their advocates, and community stakeholders who offer valued resources other than funding.

In the first two years we will:

- Through the Interagency Council, develop phased implementation plans—for approval by the Governing Board and funders—that integrate housing and service delivery and, initially, redirect existing resources across all systems to stabilize households at risk of homelessness and move those who are currently homeless into permanent housing as rapidly as possible

- Coordinate efforts with jurisdictions to develop interim efforts to provide people who experience homelessness in King County alternatives to living on the streets

- Coordinate housing and support service policy development, funding decisions, and advocacy activities to end homelessness countywide.

Within the first five years, the Governing Board, in collaboration with service providers and local communities, will:

- Assure that existing services and resources, including those targeted to homeless persons, are being utilized in the most effective and efficient ways possible

- Obtain from every city in King County agreements to partner in plan implementation and assist each city, as needed, to determine a reasonable amount of its resources to commit to sub-regional strategies to end homelessness

- Provide direction and leadership to countywide applications for homeless-related resources including the annual application for federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance funding

- Prioritize the outcome of ending homelessness in funding decisions for all housing and related support service programs that impact homeless youth, young adults, single persons, and families

- Coordinate the targeting of federal housing funds to independent and supportive permanent housing units for homeless and formerly homeless persons and the provision of needed on-site and linked support services through available service systems and resources

- Reconfigure housing and support service models and begin implementing sub-regional networks of local points of access to assure prompt engagement and assessment of housing and human service needs for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in King County

- Involve and train police, fire, and other emergency responders to assure maximum collaboration with the sub-regional networks of local access points

- Provide leadership, promote, advocate for, and establish a mechanism to generate new local revenues that complement existing resources and programs to end homelessness in King County; coordinate efforts with the Regional Human Services Board proposed in the August 2004 report of the countywide Task Force on Regional Human Services.

By 2014, in our county we will have:

- Effectively established a strong, collaborative approach to ending homelessness and planning, funding, and delivering housing and services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

- Increased both the success and the cost-effectiveness of King County's approach to assuring long-term housing stability for households that experience—or are at risk of—homelessness

- Eliminated the need for tent cities and encampments anywhere in the county.

C. **Build and Sustain the Political Will and Community Support to End Homelessness**

In the first year we will:

- Develop a communications plan for increased public awareness of who experiences homelessness, the underlying causes of homelessness, and how everyone throughout the county can play a role in ending homelessness

- Convene regular briefings for elected officials and leaders in the nonprofit and business communities throughout the county to inform them of activities related to ending homelessness in King County and invite them to participate in plan implementation

- Encourage civic, faith, and community groups and communities of color and their institutions and organizations to endorse the plan, participate in efforts to educate the community at large, volunteer in programs that assist homeless and at-risk persons, and advocate on behalf of people who experience homelessness in King County

- Identify the legislative changes necessary to end homelessness.

In the first two years we will:

- Advocate at the local, state, and federal levels for expanded access to programs and increased funding in King County that:
  ◊ Targets people who experience or are at risk of homelessness

- ◊ Supports the safety net of health, housing, and human-service programs that assist people who experience homelessness to improve their health, foster their recovery, increase their incomes, secure housing, and master independent living skills
- ◊ Results in improved use of existing resources
- ◊ Finances appropriate housing and support service options for persons who are exiting healthcare, foster care, inpatient mental health and chemical dependency treatment, and criminal justice institutions
- ◊ Offers opportunities to increase educational achievement and job skills.

Within the first five years*,* our communities will:

- Cultivate relationships with elected officials in all parts of the county to be champions for the plan to end homelessness
- Conduct annual educational briefings for all new city, suburban, and county leaders on the issue of homelessness and *Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness*
- Develop a baseline survey of community knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the plight of homeless people and the acceptability of homelessness so that we can measure progress towards the goal of intolerance for homelessness in King County by 2014
- Build the case for reforming our current systems for homelessness prevention and response by conducting an analysis of current public spending and determining the feasibility of shifting resources over time from such costly measures as jails and emergency rooms to proven prevention and intervention models
- Create new and enhanced housing and service partnerships through the realignment of existing resources and the securing of additional state, federal, and philanthropic funding
- Publish 3 annual reports on the progress we have made in ending homelessness in King County.

By 2014*,* our communities will have:

- Demonstrated the effectiveness of King County's collaborative approach to preventing homelessness and moving homeless families and individuals off the streets and out of shelters into permanent housing with on-site or linked services
- Achieved a level of knowledge and acceptance that we:
  - ◊ Understand that people who are at risk for or experience homelessness are our neighbors and vital members of our community
  - ◊ Recognize that homelessness is a shared, public problem, not just a personal tragedy
  - ◊ Welcome into our neighborhoods housing and support service programs that end homelessness and help people at risk to remain stably housed.

D. Secure 9,500 Units of Housing for Homeless Persons

In the first year we will:

- Further develop a detailed assessment by housing type and homeless subpopulation of the number of housing units and the matrix of services that are needed, projections for the costs to develop and implement these housing and service models

- Advocate at the local, state, and federal levels for the preservation of existing housing subsidies and subsidized units
- Advocate at the local, state, and federal levels for:
  ◊ Enhancements to the Washington State Housing Trust Fund
  ◊ Advocate that the Washington State Housing Finance Commission place a greater emphasis on the creation of homeless housing
  ◊ Establishment of a national housing trust fund
  ◊ Increases in funding and access for programs that help to expand and sustain housing opportunities that are safe, decent, and affordable to households at the lowest income levels
  ◊ Full funding for state and federal initiatives to pay for services that households who experience or are at risk of homelessness need to maintain housing stability.

In the first two years we will:

- Conduct a feasibility study of the ability of existing services systems, including the homeless system, to redirect existing resources and housing units to help newly housed households maintain their housing stability and continuity of care
- Convene representatives of housing authorities, nonprofit housing providers, housing developers, and private-market landlords to determine the availability of existing subsidized housing units for immediate tenancy by homeless individuals and families and create a plan to move people who are currently homeless into permanent housing over time.

Within the first five years, our communities will:

- Identify and secure 1,000 units of existing rental housing that can be leased or purchased and rehabilitated for use as permanent housing with on-site or linked support services
- As more affordable, permanent long-term solutions outlined in this plan become available, gradually shift resources away from providing emergency shelter and transitional housing to support these long-term housing resources
- Redirect existing support service capacity and combine with existing housing stock to establish evidence-based supportive housing models that maximize public and private investments and cost-effectively assure long-term housing options for formerly homeless persons
- Replicate and expand existing successful models of supportive housing in order to increase our capacity to move homeless families and individuals off the streets and out of shelters.

By 2014, our communities will have:

- Developed 4,500 new units of housing and secured 5,000 existing units located throughout the county, and assured that they remain affordable long-term to people who have been homeless
- Ensured no net loss of units of subsidized housing due to market conversion or owner opt-out through having in place effective policies and procedures, incentives, and sufficient dedicated resources to keep subsidized units available to extremely low income, homeless, and formerly homeless households
- Maximized the reuse of shelter and transitional housing resources, as they have become available, to help move people rapidly into permanent housing.

E. Deliver Flexible Culturally Competent Services to Support Stability and Independence

In the first year we will:

- Convene leadership of housing, homeless service providers, and relevant service systems through the Interagency Council to incorporate the major change strategies of this plan into a revised service delivery system. These include:
  ◊ <u>Housing first</u>—minimize shelter stays and move people into permanent housing (housing with no time limit on stays) with services as needed recognizing that some individuals, for example youth, young adults, or those experiencing domestic violence, may require more transitional assistance
  ◊ <u>Adequate reentry</u>—ensure that people leaving public institutions are able to secure housing rather than enter homelessness
  ◊ <u>Fit the services to the need</u>—determine services needed to support stability and independence; for some people with an unanticipated problem, help with a short-term financial crisis or help in securing housing may be sufficient without other supportive services; for others such as youth and young adults, or those experiencing domestic violence, a sudden, grave health problem, or decline in earning capacity, transitional services for a longer period may be needed; and for people with serious disabilities or chronic health problems, long-term support may be needed to maintain stable, decent housing
  ◊ <u>Client-centered approach</u>—make it easier for people to access the services they need through reconfiguring entry points for treatment and benefits, cross-training staff, and expanding the network of local access points to ensure convenience to public transportation
  ◊ <u>Welcoming people as they are</u>—utilize motivational interviewing and intensive case management to assist persons with chemical dependency and co-occurring disorders—that may include mental illness, developmental disabilities and/or chronic medical conditions—to secure housing and receive services wherever they are in their recovery process
  ◊ <u>Creating incentives</u>—such that long-term homeless individuals are motivated to move off the streets and share responsibility for progress towards goals that they set for themselves.

In the first two years we will:

- Coordinate with local faith communities to train volunteers to mentor homeless persons who desire faith-based support in their recovery plans.

Within the first five years, our communities will:

- Expand assertive outreach and engagement efforts countywide, emphasize services in programs that help people move from the streets into housing, and utilize community-based outreach teams, as needed, to help people transition into permanent supportive housing

- Have in place a coordinated countywide network of community-based human-service sites that respond with urgency to incidences of homelessness in the local area where they occur

- Improve the impact and cost-effectiveness of existing funding by analyzing all sources—local, state, federal, and philanthropic—that are targeted to assist people who experience, or are at risk of, homelessness and ensuring that they are:
  ◊ Coordinated and recombined to create the vision embodied in this plan

◊ Used to maximize the ongoing benefit of our current housing and service investments

◊ Supporting evidence-based and promising practices that cost-effectively and successfully move people rapidly from homelessness to long-term or permanent housing and help maintain housing stability for at-risk, low-income households

◊ Supplemented by new resources, as available, to increase both housing availability and support services capacity, thereby decreasing the number of people who become homeless and the length of time they remain homeless

- Assess the existing network of transitional housing to identify opportunities to convert or modify existing units to offer a "transition-in-place" approach in which the services transition away as residents' needs decline, but the households' tenancy in housing is not time-limited

- Provide coordinated, holistic care to persons with co-occurring disorders to ensure they do not fall through the cracks of our traditional service systems

- Coordinate with the Workforce Development Council, and other job training and placement service sites, to increase training and job opportunities for homeless people who are able to work, including hiring persons who have experienced homelessness to work as mentors and to be an integral part of outreach, engagement and stabilization efforts to help transition homeless persons off the streets into permanent supportive housing.

By 2014, our communities will have:

- Developed a strong network of critical-response, "one-stop" human-service access points in each sub-region of the county, which can help remove the threat of homelessness and serve as a starting point out of homelessness for all individuals in King County facing crisis through offering:

◊ Outreach and engagement

◊ Assistance with accessing housing

◊ Housing stabilization support such as assistance with budgeting and money management, anger and/or symptom management, and socialization skills

◊ Support and linkage to treatment and support services including mental health, chemical dependency, and primary healthcare

◊ Employment training and placement assistance

- Provided for short-term stays in emergency placements for the few individuals who need that level of intervention

- Created integrated treatment on demand for persons with disabilities who become homeless

- Ensured clear movement into appropriate housing options for any person experiencing homelessness.

F. **Measure Success and Reporting Outcomes**

In the first year we will:

- Begin implementation of the Safe Harbors homeless management information system (HMIS) and encourage providers to participate in data gathering activities designed to document the number of homeless persons and their needs

- Ensure that the privacy and concerns of homeless individuals and organizations are respected

- Ensure confidentiality for those who experience domestic violence

- Develop baseline demographic and service data as reference points for future, ongoing progress measurement and reporting
- Map public and private funding that currently supports homeless services in all jurisdictions in the county.

In the first two years we will:

- Establish an agreed-upon mechanism for identifying the number of persons that are homeless and are not accessing homeless services
- Evaluate and document cost-effective, best practice housing and service models currently in place in King County
- Advocate at the local, state, and federal levels for coordination of data reporting requirements among programs to enhance comparability of data and ease the burden on providers and consumers.

Within the first five years, our communities will:

- Fully implement the Safe Harbors homeless management information system, with monthly or quarterly reports to the Interagency Council and other stakeholders to increase our understanding of how many King County residents fall into homelessness, where they live, what their household characteristics are, why it happens and what impact agencies have working with these populations
- Provide monthly or quarterly dissemination of information to all providers about utilization and outcomes: how many new homeless people have been assessed, their demographic profile, the length of stay in shelters, the number of placements into housing, and other meaningful outcome data
- Establish protocols for data matching with relevant service systems to better capture information on reductions in service utilization and expenditures as people are moved from chaotic lives and homelessness into stable permanent housing with services
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of King County's programs in moving youth, young adults, single adults, chronically homeless individuals, and families off the streets and out of shelters into permanent housing with on-site or linked services.

By 2014, our communities will have:

- Eliminated programs that are not effective
- Developed mechanisms to collect and report data on the numbers of people accessing housing support and homelessness prevention services on a daily basis
- Documented the success of communities in King County ending homelessness through the publication of annual progress reports.

Chapter 3

Key Strategies for Homeless Subpopulations

Chapters 1 and 2 laid out the crosscutting steps our community must undertake to respond to homelessness. This chapter summarizes the extent of homelessness in our community and identifies the housing needed over ten years to make ending homelessness a reality. The following chapters vividly portray the challenges facing homeless single adults, families, and youth and young adults. These chapters also offer specific strategies for helping to prevent and end homelessness for each of these populations.

Estimating the number of people who experience homelessness on a given night—or during the year—is a challenging, yet essential, task in any community; this information is needed to implement effective strategies to address homelessness and as a reference point for looking back and measuring success. The most established system of determining the number of homeless people in our community is the One Night Count of Homeless People in King County. For the past 25 years this effort has been led by the Seattle-King County Coalition for the Homeless (SKCCH), a partnership of not-for-profit and government agencies that collaborate to address the needs of homeless people. The One Night Count has two main components: a count of people on the streets without shelter and a survey of shelters and transitional housing programs regarding the number and characteristics of people that are serving on that given night.

Based on the One Night Count, it is estimated that approximately 8,000 men, women, young adults, youth, and children are homeless on a given night in King County. While the One Night Count is the most established system of determining the number of homeless people in our community, it is clear that more people experience homelessness than are captured in the count on any given night and even larger numbers, over the course of the year.

The Once Night Count data served as the basis for the development of a projection of units needed over 10 years to provide housing for homeless persons. Subcommittees comprised of providers and advocates familiar with the single adult, families, and youth and young adult populations were convened to estimate needed resources. Population subcommittees reviewed available data from homeless providers and government agencies and using their collective professional expertise estimated both the number of units and the types of housing and related supports needed for each population. It is expected that these numbers will be refined over the life of this plan as new data emerges and experience suggests new directions.

With the increasing sophistication in data collection and analysis among providers and the implementation of the countywide Safe Harbors homeless management information system, we will be better able each year to describe the populations of individuals that access homeless prevention and intervention services in King County.

Housing strategies for ending homelessness are similar for the three homeless subpopulations—single adults, families, and youth/young adults; and some overarching concepts are summarized below. The models and strategies that support successfully housing people who are exiting homelessness are well understood and demonstrated by providers in King County. The challenge lies in securing the resources needed to develop and operate the housing and to significantly increase the capacity of our support service providers to meet tenants' multiple needs.

The following table summarizes the estimated **number of housing units needed to be created over 10 years to end homelessness** in King County, by homeless subpopulation, household type, and level of on-site support services recommended. It is anticipated that half of

these units will be secured through subsidizing or utilizing existing rental-market properties and half will be set-aside in new housing developments.

**Type of Housing and Support Needed by
Homeless Subpopulations Over 10 Years**

Homeless Subpopulation	Total Units Needed	Number of Units by Level of Support Services on Site*		
		Intensive	Moderate	None
*HUD-defined chronic homeless** *	*2,500*	*1,800*	*700*	*0*
Other single adults	*4,800*	*1,100*	*2,100*	*1,600*
Total Single Adults	7,300	2,900	2,800	1,600
Families	1,900	475	475	950
Youth/Young Adults***	300	250	0	50
Total	**9,500**	**3,625**	**3,275**	**2,600**

*In addition to on-site services where provided, all formerly homeless individuals and families will be able to access services through related systems as needed to support housing stability and quality of life. In addition, support in securing affordable and appropriate housing will be needed by many households.

**As defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: homeless for over a year or homeless more than four times in the previous three years and living with a disabling condition.

***It is estimated that some youth and young adults will be accommodated in temporary transitional programs or, with improvements in homelessness prevention and family reconciliation services, will return to their families.

Supportive housing options—housing with on-site services—for these populations fall into two categories:

- **Moderate**-level services provide consistent, ongoing support for tenants in the building to help them maintain personal and housing stability

- **Intensive**, individualized services related to mental health, chemical dependency, and/or medical services with a greater emphasis on increasing stability, reducing harm, and managing symptoms.

Supportive housing options should incorporate the following characteristics:

- **Easily accessed:** regulatory, procedural, and financial barriers must not stand in the way of assisting homeless persons to move into permanent housing as rapidly as possible

- **Include client participation** in housing and service plan development and goal setting

- **Culturally accessible and competent** programming and staff.

- **Relevant** to the specific needs of each individual or family and centered around flexible services that can change in intensity depending on current needs and that will follow the person if they move

- **Affordable** to households whose income is at or below 30% of area median, which is $1,258 per month in 2004 for individuals and $1,800 for a family of four.

Introduction to Subpopulations Chapters

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 offer a more detailed description of the causes, conditions, and strategies necessary for preventing and ending homelessness among each subpopulation. The information in these chapters was developed through convening three stakeholder groups comprised of providers and consumers who were able to draw on their first-hand experience, and through that process strategies were developed that are specific to each group. The Interagency Council and its subcommittees will take these population-specific strategies and set priorities for them based on the overall implementation plan that they develop in 2005.

Chapter 4

Preventing and Ending Homelessness Among Single Adults

It is conservatively estimated that there are 5,107 homeless single adults in King County on a given night in 2004, including those who are on the streets, in shelters, or in other non-permanent housing. This number was derived from the local one-night homeless count, which includes information related to stays in emergency and transitional programs, but likely undercounts the number of homeless individuals. This plan estimates that **2,500 individuals meet the definition of chronically homeless** developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: homeless for over a year—or homeless more than four times in the previous three years—and living with a disabling condition.

Planning to end homelessness among the diverse populations of single adults in King County must take into consideration both the barriers that individuals face in accessing housing and the multiple personal issues that further challenge the housing stability of many single adults and the chronically homeless.

Specifically, these include:

- **System factors** that prevent single adults from accessing housing:
  ◊ Very few housing options that are affordable to individuals who have no or low income
  ◊ Eligibility criteria that screen individuals out of housing, e.g., criminal or eviction histories
  ◊ Ineffective reentry planning from such institutions as hospitals, treatment programs, and jails, due both to a lack of resources and the historic separation of housing and service systems
  ◊ Fragmented systems that don't meet the multiple service needs of clients in a holistic way, require clients to endure multiple application and screening processes in order to determine eligibility, and are not structured to serve homeless clients effectively
  ◊ Discrimination due to race, gender, religion, nation of origin, family size, disability, and/or sexual identity
  ◊ Lack of access to the full range of specialized services necessary to engage, treat, and support persons with disabilities in housing due to restrictive eligibility criteria
  ◊ Lack of peer-based support models, especially for individuals who are disabled
  ◊ Shortage of appropriate housing options with on-site support services
  ◊ Limited employment and vocational training opportunities.

- **Personal issues**—such as poverty, mental illness, alcohol and chemical dependency, physical or developmental disability, health status, and experiences of trauma and violence—that without adequate and relevant support from human services systems, negatively impact housing stability.

People of color are significantly over-represented in the homeless population in King County. While people of color comprise approximately 20% of the general population in the county, they represent 61% of all people who are homeless. Racism permeates many aspects of life and can impact housing stability. In Seattle, the median income for households comprised of people of color are significantly lower than for white households, and people of color represent a disproportionate share of low-income City residents. People of color are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, which impacts access to certain housing and benefits programs, making it more difficult for a person to achieve housing stability. These are among the factors that must be considered when working to prevent homelessness among people of color.

Chronically homeless single adults who have to grapple with both systemic barriers and personal life challenges experience **overwhelming obstacles** to accessing housing. There are inadequate resources for these members of our community, especially housing with on-site support services. Their use of emergency healthcare, shelters, and the criminal justice system is disproportionately high compared to other housed and homeless adults and is a significant driver in the growth of public health and public safety costs in King County.

This plan presents strategies for ending homelessness for the chronically homeless subgroup, as well as for all single adults who experience homelessness in King County. Given the barriers to housing access described above, we are aware that **an increase in affordable housing is only part of the solution to ending episodes of homelessness** for single adults. Rent-subsidized permanent housing must be paired with a range of flexible support services to assist and support a large percentage of homeless individuals in attaining and keeping housing. Some of this can be accomplished through better alignment and configuring of existing housing and service resources, but significant new resources will also be needed.

Housing Models for Single Adults

King County has a rich network of affordable housing developers and providers who are experienced partners in providing supportive housing for low income and homeless persons. Research is showing that the costs of providing housing and support services for this population can be more than offset by savings in the cost of responding to repeated crises. At the same time the quality of life for both the individuals involved and the community is significantly improved.

The table below summarizes the estimated number of additional housing units needed over ten years to end homelessness in King County, by homeless subpopulation of single adults, housing type, and level of on-site support services recommended.

Type of Housing and Support Needed by Homeless Single Adults over 10 Years

Type of Housing	Population Description		
	Long-term homeless and disabled—chronic	Single adults not chronic	Total
Subsidized Independent Apartments	0	1,600	1,600
Units with Moderate Services on Site	700	2,100	2,800
Units with Intensive Services on Site	1,800	1,100	2,900
Total	**2,500**	**4,800**	**7,300**

Subsidized Independent Apartments

Approximately 4,800 units will be needed over ten years for homeless single adults who do not meet the Federal definition of chronically homeless. Of those, one third—1,600 people—will be adequately served by **conventional affordable housing.** Flexible housing subsidies should be

available to accommodate changes in their household income. Most of these individuals will not require further assistance once the barriers to housing are successfully negotiated. Individuals who require services after moving in will be able to access support through a local service-access points, a range of community-based service providers, or available service systems.

Permanent Supportive Housing with "Moderate" On-site Services

Approximately 2,800 homeless single adults will be appropriately served in **supportive housing that offers a moderate level of support services on site;** of these, it is estimated that 700 people would meet the federal priority of chronically homeless.

These services provide consistent, ongoing support for tenants in the building. Services may include: 24-hour security, eviction prevention services (interventions if rent payment is missed), and referrals to additional services, as needed, to help tenants remain housed. On-site services can be provided by either the entity that manages the housing units or by one or more outside service providers through memoranda of understanding.

Permanent supportive housing models that specifically serve chronic homeless individuals should adopt additional characteristics:

- **Low barrier:** avoid excessive rules such as restrictions on alcohol use; instead, focus on problematic behaviors only
- **Services on demand:** have sufficient levels of support services available onsite for when tenants are ready to access them, including activities to encourage tenant engagement. These services are responsive to the needs of tenants, and all recovery plans have tenant-generated goals
- **Peer support activities:** create an atmosphere that is conducive to peer activities including common living spaces in buildings as well as staff to help organize events and activities
- **Emphasis on safety:** use of 24/7 desk staff onsite to help buildings remain secure
- **Last resort eviction notice:** when tenants are at risk of eviction, staff assistance is available to work out alternative options.

It is anticipated that the need for supportive services will decrease over time for some tenants. Others may develop the need for more intensive on-site services. Thus, the overall system will be designed for flexibility: both to enable tenants to move between housing types, as needed, and to allow tenants' utilization of services to decline as they gain stability over time.

Supportive housing units can be either clustered in one building or scattered throughout the community. Some portion of this supportive housing stock will be targeted to house specific sub-groups who would benefit from sharing housing with a need-related focus, e.g. recovery housing, clean-and-sober housing, elder housing, and housing for women with experiences of trauma/domestic violence.

Permanent Supportive Housing with "Intensive" On-site Services

Approximately 2,900 homeless individuals will require **specialized supportive housing with intensive on-site services**. Two-thirds of these homeless individuals—an estimated 1,800 people—would meet the federal priority of chronic homelessness. A staff team with qualifications related to mental health, chemical dependency, and/or medical services will deliver housing stabilization services with a greater emphasis on harm reduction and/or symptom management. Formal agreements with service systems to implement integrated housing and service models will assure the effective and efficient delivery of these services. In order to provide the appropriate level of support needed, staff will be available on site 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Housing-specific Strategies for Single Adults

- Maximize existing investments through developing an implementation plan that:
  ◊ Reconfigures existing housing and support service delivery systems to maximize the availability of units with appropriate support services attached
  ◊ Sets targets and timelines for filling the identified housing and related service system gaps
  ◊ Earmarks funding expected to be available in the immediate future for the creation of new supportive housing dedicated to housing homeless households
  ◊ Identifies funding sources for the additional resources necessary to fill all the housing and service gaps by 2014
  ◊ Recommends those changes in service system policies and delivery models that are necessary to fully integrate the various elements of this plan.

- Secure the resources needed to meet the need for 7,300 units of accessible, rent-subsidized permanent housing over ten years, with on-site or linked services-for single adults who are homeless:
  ◊ Advocate for increased allocations of Section 8 rent subsidies and assure their targeting to households with incomes at or below 30% of area median income
  ◊ Advocate for adequate allocations of funding from local, state, federal, and private sources for developing and maintaining accessible, rent-subsidized permanent housing
  ◊ Increase both public awareness of the proven connection between supportive, service-enriched housing and ending homelessness, and the public acceptance of supportive housing programs
  ◊ Build upon and replicate successful models of housing chronically homeless single adults.

Community-based Service Access Points for Single Adults

- Network effective, locally supported, points of service access in each sub-region of King County where people at risk of homelessness and homeless households can receive assistance. The following needs will be met:
  ◊ Seamless emergency-response
  ◊ Assessment of need and development of a survival plan
  ◊ Referral to appropriate housing placement and ongoing care where needed
  ◊ Immediate intervention for urgent physical health, mental health, and chemical dependency issues
  ◊ Benefits assistance and counseling.

Culturally Competent Flexible Support Services for Single Adults

- Catalyze a shift in policy and funding to support the availability of culturally competent, flexible, integrated services for homeless and formerly homeless tenants wherever they live:
  ◊ Establish, monitor, and sustain formal working agreements between relevant service systems and providers of supportive housing for homeless and formerly homeless single adults to ensure the continued availability of services and the professional care provided by these systems, as needed, throughout their tenancy
  ◊ Secure multi-year funding for on-site and linked support services for all supportive housing programs during the planning and pre-development phase of projects
  ◊ Advocate with local, state, federal, and private sources for necessary policy changes and allocations sufficient to assure effective support services in King County.

- Enhance existing systems and develop new strategies to engage homeless people who are in shelter—or on the streets—and move them as rapidly as possible to permanent housing with on-site or linked services
  ◊ Expand the network of community-based service sites so that all parts of the county have local access points
  ◊ Develop mobile outreach and engagement teams that can find homeless people who are not in shelters and assist them to move rapidly into housing
  ◊ Move people from shelters and transitional housing to permanent housing as appropriate options are made available
  ◊ Build upon successful evidence-based models for delivering supportive services in housing for formerly homeless single adults.

- Gather data about the disproportional representation of people of color among homeless people in King County; develop and implement strategies to ameliorate those disparities

- Develop policies, procedures, and service models to assure cultural competence in all transactions between service providers and homeless or formerly homeless single adults

- Acknowledge and support the role that small organizations and less formal networks play in providing needed services to homeless and at-risk individuals.

Preventing and Ending Homelessness Among Families

The One Night Count estimates that **2,475 people in families** are homeless on any given night in King County in 2004. Providers are concerned that the One Night County dramatically undercounts the number of families who are homeless; however this number will be used for planning purposes. The most common causes of homelessness for families include: a lack of, or reduced, incomes; medical, mental health, and family emergencies; and domestic violence.

The vast majority of **homeless families have extremely low incomes**. In King County, there are very few units in the private rental market that are affordable to families with incomes below $1,800 per month, which is 30% of the median for a family of four. 2000 Census data show that 142,000 households in King County (19%) had incomes of less than $25,000 in 1999. Thus, there is a great disparity between household incomes and housing costs; a family in King County must earn $17.75 per hour ($3,080 per month)—about two and a half times the minimum wage—to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.

As a result of low household incomes and the lack of affordable housing, most homeless families remain without a stable home for several years and end up moving from place to place. Waiting times for affordable permanent housing can be up to five years. There are also few temporary and transitional housing openings. Families who are able to access shelter and transitional housing will often stay for the maximum length of time. At the end of this period, if housing is still not available, it is not uncommon for families to reenter the shelter system. **Families need housing that is not time-limited and remains affordable long-term.**

Due to the large gap between homeless families' ability to pay rent and the costs of housing in King County, virtually every household will need **an ongoing monthly rent subsidy** for market-rate housing in order to move from homelessness to permanent housing and maintain that housing over time. Many homeless families have at least one household member that is working, but they typically lack the skills and education necessary for competitive jobs that provide a living wage, family health benefits, and paid sick leave. Work is frequently either temporary or part-time. **Job training and educational opportunities leading to living wage jobs are essential** to moving families out of homelessness. Additionally, families need ongoing affordable childcare, including after school care, that is available day or night and easily accessible to work or home.

While some families fall into homelessness due to economic concerns alone—low incomes and the high cost of housing—increasingly, similar to homeless single adults, homeless families are also **experiencing complex life situations** that affect housing stability and success in employment. These barriers to stability include major mental health issues, including undiagnosed mental illnesses; chemical dependency; histories of trauma; disabling health issues; criminal justice involvement; and immigration status. Many homeless families also have financial barriers to housing that include significant debt to past landlords and housing authorities, money owed on tickets and driving violations, unpaid bills that are in collections, and bankruptcies.

Domestic violence is common among homeless families. It is not only a leading cause of homelessness for women, but it is also a key reason why families become separated from their extended support systems. Many individuals who have experienced domestic violence enter the homeless system without financial resources and with poor credit, employment, and housing histories. The effects of violence in the home severely impact every aspect of stability for both children and parents, and it often takes years for the family to regain a sense of safety. Some

families who end up homeless in King County are fleeing an abuser from another state, and as a result, they have severed contact with their families and their past. Families in this situation require complete confidentiality and a supportive environment where they can build new lives.

Children in homeless families face disruptions in every part of their lives. Homeless children are often behind in their immunizations, and they face a host of health problems—such as infections, trauma, asthma, fetal alcohol syndrome, and lice infestations—that too often go undiagnosed and untreated. Normal childhood development is seriously affected by homelessness, with academic difficulties, behavior problems, developmental delays, anxiety, depression, and learning difficulties all documented effects. These conditions too often fuel the next generation of homeless people.

Homeless families with the complex life situations described above require a significant amount of support from case managers and program staff. Without an appropriate level of ongoing support, they end up repeatedly cycling through the homeless shelter system. In addition to having very few options in the private rental market, many such families also have challenges accessing transitional and permanent housing programs as **resources are not sufficient to serve all in need** and some do not meet eligibility requirements. Affordable permanent housing with on-site or linked services is needed but remains largely unavailable for families.

Disparities in income level and educational achievement are factors for families experiencing homelessness. It is estimated that, nationally, 62% of homeless families are comprised of people of color, with African American families accounting for 43% of all homeless families. Nationally, African Americans and Latinos are less likely than whites to have graduated from college and regardless of educational attainment are likely to have lower salaries than whites. Without access to living wage jobs, it is exceedingly difficult in King County's housing market for a family to maintain housing stability. Children are significantly impacted by experiences of homelessness. Homeless children are more likely to have physical and mental health problems, as are their parents, and difficulty in school than their housed counterparts. As children of color are disproportionately represented among the homeless population, these issues disproportionately impact them.

Homeless **refugee and immigrant** families are being seen in increasing numbers. They have many issues that prevent them from stabilizing in housing, including limited English proficiency, lack of documentation, medical issues, and lack of formal education. Because organizations serving refugee and immigrant families do not have sufficient resources to assist those with multiple needs, some end up homeless and accessing homeless family services. Case managers must spend a lot of time with these families, yet they lack the training and tools necessary to address their diverse cultural and social issues. Interpreter services are also expensive and not always available. In addition, the eligibility criteria for most subsidized housing programs prevent **undocumented** families from accessing housing assistance.

Although there is **a network of strong providers** assisting homeless families in King County, the delivery of homeless services to families is complicated because there is limited funding and shelter space available. In addition, there are many points of entry, and typically a homeless family seeking shelter must make calls to multiple programs over several weeks to find available space. Providers do not have sufficient funding and staff capacity to provide the desired follow up to a family once their involvement in a program ends.

In addition to the homeless service system, many families interface with **multiple systems** before, during, and after their homelessness. These include mental health and chemical dependency, healthcare, Social Security, the Washington Department of Social and Health

Services (DSHS), Child Protective Services, criminal justice, and others. These systems can be compartmentalized, difficult to navigate, and sometimes inefficient; as a result, critical needs may not addressed despite a client's or advocate's best efforts.

Serving families with a wide range of health and social service needs increases pressure on direct services staff—case managers in particular—who must be familiar with a range of issues and the broad array of services available in the community. Although **increased training** is needed for staff who work with homeless families, most homeless programs operate within funder-defined budget categories that typically do not prioritize training.

Recognizing both the profound need for housing for homeless families in the Puget Sound region and the shortage of appropriate affordable housing options, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, in collaboration with local jurisdictions and public housing authorities, established the Sound Families Initiative. The Foundation has committed $40 million towards the establishment of 1,500 units of housing and related support services for homeless families in King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties. These funds leverage significant additional public investment provided through government programs at all levels.

Taking the supportive housing approach that **families exiting homelessness need a range of services attached to housing,** Sound Families provides funding for both the housing and the services that family members need. As of September 2004, Sound Families has funded more than 750 new units in the three counties. After the first five years, however, funding for family support service needs must be provided by other resources. In spite of the initial successes of the Sound Families Initiative, there still remains a need to secure long-term funding to ensure that existing transitional and permanent supportive housing projects can provide essential housing and services for formerly homeless families over the long term.

In 2004, the Washington State legislature created the **Washington Families Fund**, which will fund services linked with housing to help homeless families statewide move successfully from homelessness to stable housing and self-sufficiency. These resources will be matched by private contributions, federal Section 8 project-based subsidies, and local public funds.

Following are recommendations to realign the current system, prevent family homelessness, and add additional resources to rapidly move homeless families into permanent housing.

Housing Strategies for Families

The primary housing goal is that all families experiencing homelessness will have immediate access to permanent, affordable independent or supportive housing. The adjacent table summarizes the estimated need for additional housing units over 10 years. It is estimated that to meet this goal, 950 units will be leased in the private rental market and 950 units of supportive housing will be developed. Recommendations include:

Type of Housing	Homeless Families Housed Over 10 Years
Subsidized Independent Apartments	950
Units with Moderate Services on Site	475
Units with Intensive Services on Site	475
Total	**1,900**

- Ensure that every family that falls into homelessness can access appropriate affordable housing:
  ◊ Create an adequate supply of permanent housing that is affordable for families whose income is at or below 30% of the area median and secure ongoing subsidies from local, state, federal, and philanthropic sources to keep this housing affordable
  ◊ Build stronger partnerships between service providers and systems, non-profit housing providers, public housing authorities, and private-market landlords so that families with negative housing histories and criminal records are not screened out of available units
  ◊ For those families who are not able to move immediately into permanent housing—for example, domestic violence victims, families in substance abuse treatment, and families who are hard to house because of particular unique circumstances—provide transitional housing, with a primary focus of moving them to permanent affordable housing within one year or as quickly as possible; in some instances longer stays will be needed to achieve housing stability. Where appropriate, provide services that decrease as stability is achieved, allowing families to "transition in place" and remain in their housing after their needs for stabilization services have declined.

- Continue housing assistance to formerly homeless families after placement in permanent housing, as needed depending on their specific situation and the resources available to them. Families experiencing complex life situations will need assistance over a longer period of time. It is estimated that:
  ◊ 5% of families will need no housing subsidy
  ◊ 15% of families will need a subsidy for up to 2 years
  ◊ 20% of families will need a subsidy for 2 to 5 years
  ◊ 60% of families will need a subsidy for 5 years or more.

Support Services for Families

Most families that experience the trauma of homelessness will require access to services that will help them to support housing and family stability. The following strategies promote family and housing stability:

- Provide a network of community-based, local points of access where families can easily obtain immediate short-term housing, family service and housing assessments, immediate referrals to permanent housing, and linkages to case management or a care coordination team—that may include a public health nurse, social worker, and therapist—that will follow the family until they are stabilized in permanent supportive housing

- Ensure housing and family stability through the provision of appropriate support services. Assure that support services are focused on the family's individual needs, goal oriented, culturally relevant, flexible, and respectful of individual and family confidentiality:
  ◊ Evaluate current homeless family services, identify model programs, and set quality standards, goals for case management, and minimum services to be provided to each family served
  ◊ Streamline, coordinate, and whenever possible, deliver services onsite to the family wherever they are residing
  ◊ Assist with family unification and offer supports to help strengthen family systems
  ◊ Increase the availability of culturally appropriate family and mental health counseling, domestic violence support, health education, childcare, and parenting services

◊ Develop service coordination teams that comprise representatives of the social service, healthcare, and government systems that serve homeless families and include the family as team members for developing and assessing the effectiveness of service and housing plans; re-assess service plans at least quarterly and make adjustments as needed

- Expand existing case management programs that provide extended support services and that work with families to ensure that they can not only move into housing but stay there long-term. It is estimated that:
  ◊ 50% of families will not need regular case management after moving into permanent housing, but will require assistance in emergencies
  ◊ 25% of families will need case management for 6 months after moving into permanent housing
  ◊ 25% of families will need long-term support services in permanent supportive housing

- Provide families with both immediate and ongoing support services that promote increased income, educational advancement, and household self-sufficiency:
  ◊ Enhance training, education, and advocacy opportunities to promote a family's ability to access living-wage jobs, increase their income, and earn a living wage in King County
  ◊ Empower families through educational services that promote financial and housing stability such as employment counseling, credit repair, money management, financial planning, and housing/tenant information
  ◊ Increase funding to provide ongoing affordable childcare to all parents while they are in school, searching for work, or are employed

- Gather data about the disproportional representation of people of color among homeless families in King County; develop and implement strategies to ameliorate those disparities.

Systems Coordination Strategies Related to Families

A variety of local, state, federal and philanthropic programs exist to support the well being and effective functioning of families. However, better coordination among the various services systems that homeless families interface with is essential.

- Develop policies, procedures, and service models to assure cultural competence in all transactions between service providers and homeless or formerly homeless families.

- Acknowledge and support the role that small organizations and less formal networks play in providing needed services to homeless and at-risk families

- Assess current benefits programs and advocate for changes to programs when they do not foster family stability (i.e. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and WorkFirst, Washington State's welfare reform program that helps financially struggling families find, keep and improve their jobs)

- Ensure that all homeless children have the resources they need to succeed in school:
  ◊ Create new programs and expand existing program capacity so that all homeless children have access to a free education from early childhood through early adulthood education - including life skills training.

◊ Coordinate with and support the work of homeless liaisons that are located within the schools

◊ Collaborate with the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) and school superintendents in King County to ensure that all public schools are in full compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act's requirements

◊ Ensure that OSPI establishes minimum standards for principals to meet the needs of homeless students—and monitors their compliance—regarding transportation, clothing, supplies, and equipment in order for them to succeed in the classroom.

Chapter 6

Preventing and Ending Homelessness Among Youth and Young Adults

Homeless young people up to the age of 24 are called out separately in this plan because **the issues they face and the solutions to their homelessness are significantly different from those of both older adults and children who are living with parents or guardians.** They have developmental and socialization needs and challenges in common, and identify more with each other than with other homeless populations.

According to the local One Night Count, approximately **420 youth and young adults are homeless on any given night** in King County. Providers and advocates believe this number does not reflect all youth and young adults who are homeless each night, and indicate that as many as 2,000 may experience homelessness each year. Youth and young adults become homeless when they run away, are told by parents to leave, age out of foster care, become emancipated, become parents, are discharged from institutions, flee situations of abuse and domestic violence, or leave non-functioning families that simply do not miss them when they're not at home. This estimate does not include a large number of young people who spend significant time on the streets but do not show up in counts of the "sheltered or unsheltered" homeless population because they move from friend to friend, stay with relatives, or make unsafe choices to secure short-term living arrangements. Even as the percentage of youth of color who are counted as homeless is increasing, providers working in the community estimate that there remains an even larger number of youth of color who do not have stable living situations yet are not included in homeless counts.

There are many myths about homeless youth and young adults that must be dispelled to fully understand the issues faced by youth and young adults on the streets and the providers who serve them. Some common myths include: homeless youth and young adults are identifiable because they look a certain way, have left home because they have authority issues, use drugs, have criminal histories, and don't want to work or take care of themselves. In reality, the reasons young people leave home are myriad. Many come from families that are impacted by mental illness, chemical dependency, and domestic violence. More are thrown away than run away. Homeless youth are more likely to be the victims of crimes than to commit crimes.

Youth and young adults who experience homelessness are **severely impacted by racism homophobia and poverty.** Homophobia and family conflict resulting from adolescents' acknowledging that they are gay or lesbian is a common contributing factor to homelessness. Young people's experiences with homophobia, racism and prejudices not only are contributing factors to why they are out of their home, but also prevent youth from seeking services due to fears of experiencing further discrimination.

Each homeless young person offers a unique combination of strengths and grapples with an array of challenges. Most youth and young adults on the streets and in homeless programs have experienced multiple and significant breakdowns in the systems that are charged with their care: family, community, school, foster care, and other institutions. Many share a keen distrust of adults and systems populated by adults.

While outreach and engagement services are key components of all homeless service delivery systems, they are absolutely essential to effecting change for homeless young people. Relationship building and engagement activities often take place over several years before significant change in a young person is visible to the external observer. Peer support and mentoring provide a real

benefit for some. **The importance of active outreach to, and engagement with, this population cannot be overemphasized.**

Various Washington State laws and licensing requirements govern the provision of services and shelter to youth under the age of 18. These **laws and regulations serve to protect out-of-home youth; however, they also inhibit the provision of housing and services to this vulnerable population.** Changes to legislation and administrative codes are needed to increase the ability of homeless providers to appropriately assess, engage, and serve youth on the streets, to ensure their safety and well-being, and to promote positive housing outcomes. Most youth on the street have not been reported as missing, and runaways tend to return home relatively quickly. Legislative changes will help protect all homeless young people.

The continuum of care for homeless youth and young adults—much like the adult system—has **benefited from the efforts of the faith community and networks of dedicated and caring volunteers.** Programs and services operated by volunteers and non-professional staff have emerged in part because there haven't been the resources necessary to fully fund social-service responses to the crisis of youth homelessness. Existing neighborhood-based partnerships between the faith community, business interests, local residents, and social service agencies offer models for collaboration and resource sharing that can be replicated in other regions of the county and for other homeless subpopulations. To achieve optimal outcomes, they should be **augmented with professional staff,** especially for mental health and chemical dependency issues.

Youth and young adults encounter a range of **barriers to housing stability. First, they are in large part still too young to be on their own.** Lack of rental history, income, or even the legal standing to work or sign a rental contract prohibit many young people who are homeless from meeting their housing needs in the private rental market. At the same time supportive housing providers are constrained by legal and funding requirements, with the result that youth and young adults perpetually fall through the gaps in the existing continuum of housing and services. Difficulties related to poverty, limited job skills, domestic violence, and abuse take on an added dimension for **parenting teens and young adults** who are responsible for the care and well-being of their children. Resources targeting this population typically work at capacity.

Housing success and stability for **youth and young adults of color** are further impacted by challenges to family stability and success in education and employment. In King County, children of color make up one-third of all children but more than half of children in foster care. A Native American child is five times as likely as a white child to be placed in foster care or remain in care longer than 2 years. Children and youth who have been placed in foster care are more likely to experience homelessness as adults. There is a significant educational achievement gap between African American and white children—data shows a disparity between African American and white children meeting or exceeding standards as early as 4th grade. In Washington State in 2002, while 71% of Caucasian students graduated on time, only 39% of African American students did. The income of high school graduates typically exceeds that of non-graduates by a significant margin.

The **length of time it takes to address the barriers to housing stability** are as varied as the conditions that cause young people to become homeless. While most youth are not traditionally classified as chronically homeless, it is often necessary to work with young people for years before they reach stability. Programs need to accommodate young people having setbacks in their progress by allowing youth to re-enter programs and access the long-term chemical dependency and mental health treatment resources that those who experience trauma and relapse need for their recovery. Most young people who end up on the street have not finished growing

up, including those who are raising children themselves. Ultimately, homeless program staff help to raise these youth, and it takes time, skill, dedication, and flexibility.

While this plan promotes a housing first model of moving homeless persons from the streets to permanent housing as quickly as possible whenever possible, for the reasons described above it is expected that **many youth and young adults will require transitional assistance** before permanency in housing can be achieved.

There is a powerful, shared culture among young people that influences all youth and young adults, particularly those who are homeless. **To be successful, housing and support services must be provided in a culturally competent manner** that is respectful of the diverse experiences of each young person. Successful housing and related service models have evolved in King County to meet the unique needs and circumstances of youth and young adults. These programs include housing types and services that are designed to match the developmental and socialization levels and service needs of individuals within this broad category. The following strategies to end homelessness and increase the effectiveness of housing and services programs for youth and young adults build upon the knowledge and experience of these providers.

Prevention Strategies for Youth and Young Adults

- Increase understanding about youth and young adult homelessness through a multi-pronged initiative that provides information to:
  ◊ Schools and community centers regarding the causes and outcomes of family crisis, warning signs for at-risk youth, and the availability of intervention services
  ◊ Service providers, including those serving homeless adults, about the developmental needs of the youth and young adult population

- Partner with the foster care system to:
  ◊ Develop and implement alternative foster care models that focus on enhancing support to foster families in an effort to minimize multiple placements
  ◊ Explore the option of extending foster care for some youth, on a voluntary basis, to age 21
  ◊ Enhance financial, practical and emotional supports available to teenagers so that they can develop a specific and achievable housing plan and successfully transition from foster care to independent living and employment or higher education

- Prevent homelessness among youth and young adults through:
  ◊ Proactive targeting of family preservation and reconciliation services
  ◊ Ensuring that culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate services are available to every family during times of crisis
  ◊ Increasing resources available to families whose children have run away or are placed out-of-home to support quick family reunification where appropriate and possible
  ◊ Collaborating with systems such as mental health and chemical dependency treatment, juvenile detention, and jails to help ensure that specific and achievable housing plans are in place for every youth and young adult prior to reentry

- Document the success of homelessness prevention services.

Legislative and Regulatory Change Strategies Related to Youth and Young Adults

- Provide leadership, promote, and advocate for legislative and regulatory changes at the state and federal level that will enhance the safety, well-being, and self-sufficiency of youth and young adults who are homeless:
  ◊ Seek changes to Washington State legislation and the Washington Administrative Code that would increase access to homeless services, including shelter, for those under 18
  ◊ Specifically, advocate changing the notification requirement under the Becca Bill to 72 hours, in keeping with federal regulations. This change will allow for thorough assessment of each youth's needs and circumstances
  ◊ Advocate for changes to federal regulations that limit youth's access to successful housing and job training programs.

Housing and Related Service Strategies for Youth and Young Adults

- Create a network of community-based information and human-service centers that are accessible to youth in each sub-region of the county and offer low-barrier access to a full continuum of outreach, engagement, case management, education, job training, hygiene facilities, drop-in centers, overnight shelters, and referrals to long-term housing

- Ensure the availability of—and increase funding for—a range of support services to promote success in housing for homeless youth and young adults. At a minimum, these services must include: mental health and substance use treatment, basic life skills development, job training, case management, legal representation and advocacy, and access to medical care.

- Develop dormitory-style housing for youth and young adults that is connected to vocational training and community colleges to assure that homeless youth can have stable, affordable housing while they increase they job skills and advance their education. An appropriate model for this type of program is an urban Job Corps residential program for at-risk youth.

- Gather data about the disproportional representation of youth and young adults of color among the homeless population in King County; develop and implement strategies to ameliorate those disparities.

- Increase housing opportunities for youth whose criminal history includes felonies and sexual offenses. Research, secure funding, and implement evidence-based practices. Advocate for specific policy or legislative changes that will provide easier access to existing ex-offender housing and service programs for this population.

- Secure increased local funding for services-only projects that are particularly important for housing stability and success of youth and young adults, e.g. case management, outreach, and job training

- Research possibilities for increasing youth-oriented emergency resources targeted to young men ages 18 – 21, either through conversion/adaptation of existing adult or family shelter programs or through developing new facilities

- Advocate for increased legal representation for young people engaged in juvenile court proceedings including specialized case management and advocacy resources for youth involved in family court issues, At-Risk Youth (ARY) and Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petitions and processes

- Engage service providers and funders in the development of realistic accountability standards and outcomes:
    ◊ Consider the need to work with some youth over a long period of time—beyond the length of annual contracts—and allow for flexibility in housing models that may at times have vacancies or variations in performance levels as they address the real needs of youth
    ◊ Re-evaluate existing standards and outcomes to develop age-appropriate outcomes specific to youth under 18 and for those over 18.

Building Leadership, Will, and Momentum to End Homelessness

The goal of this plan is to create an integrated, countywide response to ending homelessness. The current aggregations of government, nonprofit, faith, civic, philanthropic, and community-based organizations that are working towards this end are fragmented. As a result, planning processes and the solutions they have proposed reflect a non-integrated approach to solving homelessness, and other, countywide human service issues:

- Systems planning efforts have offered only stopgap solutions to managing homelessness without addressing the root causes of homelessness in King County.

- Without the benefit of an over-arching and unifying strategy, resources have been allocated and expended across the county and in its many jurisdictions in an uncoordinated fashion. Too often, individuals with multiple problems receive housing and supportive services that only address part of their needs, resulting in poor outcomes related to ending their homelessness.

- State and Federal government departments do not have priorities aligned which means that pass through funds and legal and contractual obligations inhibit collaboration across populations.

- Funders support individual providers without any coordination regarding priorities and system-wide approaches.

- County and city government leaders have not made a compelling case to the public that investments in homelessness prevention and intervention strategies are a more cost-effective way of responding to homelessness than their historic investment approaches, which expend funds in unnecessary emergency room, jail and other institutional admissions which are costly and have limited impact on ending homelessness.

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has noted, "No community-wide coordinating entity controls and manages the full spectrum of resources and services targeting chronic homelessness [in Seattle and King County]" and this situation has hampered the county's ability to secure federal funds targeted to ending chronic homelessness.

Our community has responded to the problem of homelessness to some extent. We currently have at least eleven different initiatives engaged in planning processes and activities related to homeless issues in our region. These efforts include the following groups:

- Committee to End Homelessness in King County
- *Sound Families* Initiative
- *Taking Health Care Home*
- United Way of King County's *Out of the Rain* Homeless Initiative
- Chronic Populations Advisory Council
- Health Care for the Homeless Planning Committee
- Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness
- King County Regional Task Force on Human Services
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Programs Steering Committee
- Seattle-King County Coalition for the Homeless
- Washington State Policy Academy on Chronic Homelessness.

Implementing Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness

The success of this plan requires an unprecedented move towards unification among elected officials, government entities, faith communities, communities of color and their institutions and organizations, providers, philanthropy, and the general public in King County. Doing their business in this unified approach will require leaders in all areas of the county to move beyond their parochial concerns and recognize that a collective approach to ending long-term homelessness is essential to our success in addressing this major social issue.

As this plan is implemented, we can expect to realize:

- A greater sharing of information, resources, and responsibility across the multiple systems that are making commitments to work together to remove the barriers that people who are homeless and struggle with multiple problems (e.g., mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, criminal justice system involvement, etc.) must overcome to successfully access long-term housing and services

- A better understanding of the factors that lead to disproportionate numbers of people of color being represented among the homeless population

- A decrease in the fragmentation of funding by government and philanthropic organizations that offers only partial solutions and fails to provide a holistic response to multiple-problem clients

- An increase in the efficiency and effectiveness as we better integrate housing and supportive service programs; national research has demonstrated that an approach to ending long-term homelessness that integrates assertive prevention with aggressive re-housing offers the greatest promise of successful outcomes and can significantly reduce ongoing expenditures

- An increase in our capacity to attract competitive grants from local, state, federal, and philanthropic sources that are targeted to augment existing housing and service systems and support the replication of emerging promising practice models

- An increase in public interest and investment in creative solutions to ending homelessness, excitement about and involvement in countywide and local efforts, and willingness to support the creation and renewal of local and countywide revenue streams, including new levies, property taxes, etc.

- Proportional contributions of resources dedicated to ending homelessness by cities throughout the county

- Increased collaboration with efforts to end homelessness in Pierce and Snohomish Counties and across Washington State.

Phase I Leadership Model

The Committee to End Homelessness in King County proposes the formation of the Committee to End Homelessness in King County **Governing Board** that will provide high-level oversight of the implementation of *Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.* It will comprise 10-20 influential members of the diverse communities of King County and will meet quarterly to:

- Provide policy guidance and coordination of countywide activities

- Secure funding for ongoing operations and to assure successful plan implementation

- Build and sustain broad public participation in ending homelessness

- Encourage and sustain partnerships through incentives and targeted funding opportunities

- Provide a forum for discussion, information-sharing, and collaboration on key issues, including the disproportionate representation of people of color among the homeless population

- Educate and influence policy makers at the local, state, and federal levels.

The Governing Board will convene a **Consumer Advisory Council** comprising members who represent the broad array of people— including youth, young adults, families, single adults, and residents of all regions of the county—who experience homelessness in King County. The Consumer Advisory Council will likewise meet at least quarterly and provide the Governing Board with feedback, ideas for addressing housing and service delivery concerns, suggestions on program design, and recommendations regarding policy issues. At least one representative from this council will serve on the Governing Board.

An **Interagency Council** will support the work of the Governing Board and Consumer Advisory Council. The Council will comprise representatives of the major players and systems that are essential partners in the work to end homelessness in King County. Interagency Council members will be bound by memoranda of understanding and bylaws that will detail their commitments of staff and financial resources and establish accountability throughout the system. The Interagency Council will meet monthly—at a minimum—and have an active subcommittee structure.

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Governing Board
Key community leaders

Consumer Advisory Council

Homeless and formerly homeless persons

Interagency Council

Funders and key players in housing and support service delivery

Subcommittees

The work of the Governing Board, Consumer Advisory Council, and Interagency Council will be supported in Phase I by the King County Department of Community and Human Services

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The work plan for the Interagency Council will reflect the goals of *Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness*, and will include such activities as:

- Sponsoring changes to current programs and system design

- Coordinating of data collection, analysis and reporting

- Developing recommendations regarding the allocation of resources

- Problem solving regarding housing and service eligibility, availability and accessibility

- Creating and supporting new service delivery models and enhancements to services

- Collaborating closely with other planning activities and entities.

Staff support to the Governing Board, Consumer Advisory Council, and Interagency Council will be hosted at the outset by the King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) and funded in collaboration with the City of Seattle, United Way of King County, and other involved stakeholders. Additional staffing resources will be supplied, as needed, through consultants, loaned staff, and representatives of the Interagency Council's membership. In this role, DCHS will be responsible for both daily operations and oversight of plan implementation.
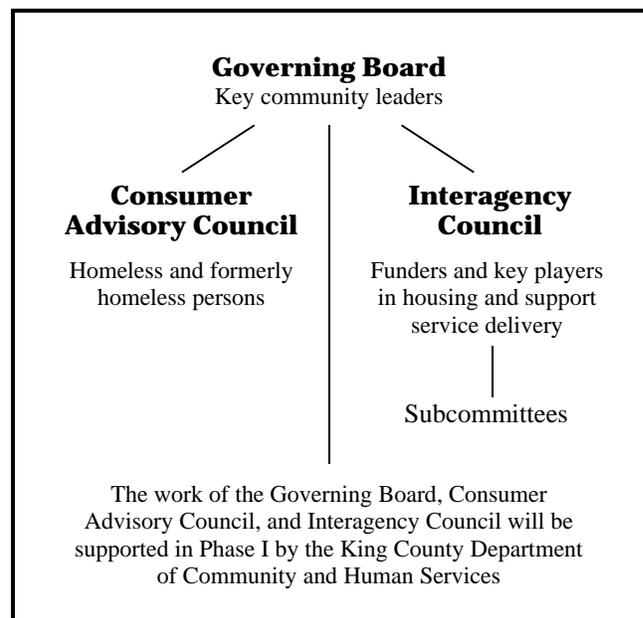
Phase II Leadership Model

In order to assure the success of this plan, both long-term leadership and a mechanism to generate new revenue will be necessary. It is anticipated that, through the work of the Governing Board and with the support of a new dedicated funding stream and the realignment of existing dollars, sufficient support services funding will be made available and coordinated with the securing of new housing options so that homeless and formerly homeless households will receive the services they need to move into and maintain permanent housing. It is also expected that the Governing Board will be able to further influence both state and federal service systems to align their funding and service priorities with those of the plan and become full partners in ending homelessness in King County.

At the same time that the Committee to End Homelessness in King County was meeting to develop its plan to end homelessness, the Task Force on Regional Human Services, appointed by County Executive Ron Sims, was convened to develop strategies for stabilizing the county's health and human services system. In their August 2004 Final Report, Task Force members concluded "that fundamental and immediate improvements are required if the region is to rise to the challenge of meeting the human service needs of its residents, now and in the future." [To download the report, go to: www.metrokc.gov/exec/tfrhs/]

The Task Force Report specifically referenced the Committee to End Homelessness in King County as the "principal region-wide forum to oversee a homeless response." The report also included two recommendations that are pertinent to the goal of ending homelessness in King County. It calls for:

- An overarching administrative infrastructure—a Regional Human Services Board—to organize an ongoing planning function that convenes all funders
- A new voter-approved initiative to create a revenue source that is dedicated to human services funding.

The Committee to End Homelessness in King County believes that the establishment of a new source of revenue in the county is essential to the full implementation of this plan and, therefore, is committed to working to create such a mechanism within the next three years.

Measuring Success and Reporting Outcomes

Central to the role of the Governing Board and Interagency Council will be the measuring and reporting of achievements along the way towards ending homelessness in King County. The Interagency Council will be charged with reviewing data and, with guidance from the Governing Board, will draw upon these data to report back to the community on achievements and outcomes.

Specific charges to the Interagency Council regarding data and outcomes include:

- Assist in the implementation of the Safe Harbors homeless management information system and develop the capability to integrate its data with that captured by service systems, including health, mental health, juvenile and adult justice, foster care, chemical dependency treatment, Veterans Affairs, TANF, and social welfare programs
- Develop a street count methodology to identify the number of people who are not counted among the people in the HMIS system

- In addition to indicators mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for HMIS implementation, develop additional local indicators that will help the community track progress towards the goal of ending homelessness in King County

- Develop consistent goals for use by programs countywide; provide regular—monthly or quarterly—reports to the Governing Board, Interagency Council, and other stakeholders on the utilization of services, change in incidence of homeless, successful placements in housing, and other analysis of homeless trends in the county

- Identify chronically homeless persons served by numerous systems and analyze data regarding their housing and service utilization with an eye to improving the quality and appropriateness of services received and reducing the time it takes to attain stable permanent housing

- Monitor and report on reductions in homelessness over the next 10 years.

Building and Sustaining Political Will and Community Support

Political will is an act or process of decision making that engages power and authority toward a stated end. It requires strong purpose and determination combined with the power of conscious and deliberate action. No plan to end homelessness can succeed without the support of the local community—this includes residents, people experiencing homelessness, elected officials, service providers, funders and others. This support begins by building our community's awareness of who experiences homelessness and why people become homeless and extends to people directing their philanthropy, votes, and volunteerism in a focused way. Specific initiatives aimed at building and sustaining political will and community support include:

- Support and coordinate public policy work that will help end homelessness in King County:
  ◊ Through the work of the Governing Board, Consumer Advisory Council, and Interagency Council, target effective public policy changes
  ◊ Engage communities of color and their institutions and organizations, faith communities, business interests, small business owners, and elected officials as leaders in the effort to end homelessness
  ◊ Actively support and collaborate with ongoing efforts to address the underlying causes of homelessness—e.g., livable wage advocacy, anti-racism coalitions, and anti-violence activities—and create a subcommittee of the Interagency Council to coordinate this work

- Implement a communication plan for increased public awareness of who experiences homelessness, its underlying causes, and how concerned citizens can help to end homelessness in King County.
  ◊ Create and enact a media campaign to educate the public on the issue of homelessness
  ◊ Measure public perception of homelessness via a public opinion survey
  ◊ Inform residents of cities, neighborhoods, and towns throughout the county of the location and range of services that is available at their local point-of-access service center and encourage volunteerism in ending homelessness at the neighborhood/community level.

Chapter 8
Concluding Statement

There is a role in ending homelessness for everyone who lives in King County. Each of us can, and will, find a way—great or small—to contribute our time, money, or good thinking over the next decade as we eliminate the need for tent cities and encampments and provide safe, appropriate, and affordable housing for every man, woman, and child in King County. The Governing Board and Interagency Council will be calling for dramatic changes in our approach to preventing homelessness and delivering housing and services to those who experience homelessness. *Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness* outlines specific actions that will enable our communities to:

- 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 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 these 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.

This plan is just a starting point—a community-wide effort to organize our resources and direct them to implementing effective solutions. It is a housing and human services undertaking of unprecedented proportions. As we learn more about the dynamics of homelessness today and implement successful strategies to meet the broad needs that have been identified, we will map our successes and chart new directions. We will succeed in ensuring a roof over every bed in King County.

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"Despite what pessimists say, homelessness is not a given, and we should never surrender to hopelessness. If our community is to be truly strengthened, we must end homelessness and not merely manage it."

Dan Brettler
CEO, Car Toys Inc.