

Municipal Responses to Homelessness

OVERVIEW

In the Northwest, and throughout America, homelessness is an epidemic. Crisis levels of citizens without permanent homes disrupts communities, stresses economic systems, and challenges jurisdictions to respond with compassion and innovation. The following are snapshots of how other cities are responding to the needs of their most vulnerable residents while also working to mitigate the negative impacts of homelessness on their economic systems.

It is important to note that responses in Oregon and Wisconsin are influenced by those State's income tax provisions.

BELLINGHAM COUNTY SEAT

Population – Whatcom County 216,800

Bellingham 87,574 (2016)

PIT Numbers for Whatcom 2017 – Unsheltered 299

Total Homeless – 742

- **HOME FUND:** On November 6, 2012 the City passed a Home Fund Levy which generates \$3 million per year to support Rental Production & Preservation, Rental Assistance & Services, and Homebuyer Acquisition & Opportunity Loans. In less than three years, the Home Fund committed to help fund 238 units of housing and preserve 118 units of rental and transitional housing.
- **TENT CAMPS:** On February 26, 2018, the City Council held a public hearing and adopted Ordinance 2018-02-005 into law, an emergency interim zoning ordinance regarding tent encampments. Washington State law allows religious organizations to host temporary tent encampments to provide shelter for people experiencing homelessness.
- **24/7 SHELTER:** As of April 2018, the City of Bellingham has committed to helping to fund a new location for a 24/7 homeless shelter and day center, to be run by Lighthouse Mission Ministries. Appropriate locations are being scouted, with the aid of Whatcom County and nonprofit leaders. <https://www.cob.org/services/housing/Pages/emergency-night-shelter-proposal.aspx>

EVERETT COUNTY SEAT

Population – Snohomish County 787,620

Everett 109,043 (2016)

PIT Numbers for Snohomish 2017 – Unsheltered 515

Total Homeless – 1066

- **SAFE STREETS INITIATIVE:** In July 2014, the City of Everett convened the Community Streets Initiative Task force, to seek to better understand the street-level social issues in Everett's commercial-core areas and identify potential short- and long-term actions for the community to address those issues. The result was a Comprehensive Safe Streets Plan, which focuses on enforcement, diversion, and housing. A housing levy similar to Bellingham's was recommended but has yet to be brought to vote.

- **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING:** In October of 2015, the City of Everett began working with Snohomish County, Providence Regional Medical Center, Catholic Housing Services/Catholic Community Services and other local partners to design and build a permanent supportive housing facility for 65 chronically homeless individuals in the community. The project broke ground this month.

TACOMA COUNTY SEAT

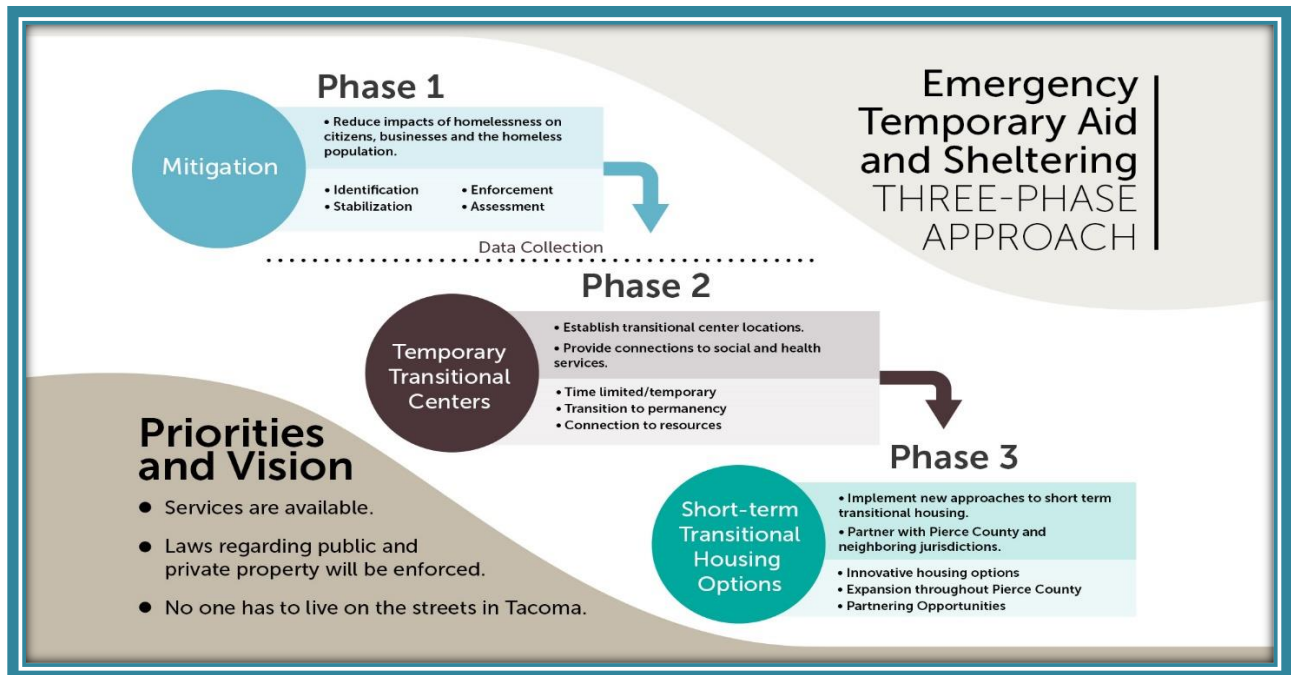
Population – Pierce County 876,764

Tacoma 211,277 (2016)

PIT Numbers for Pierce County – Unsheltered 504

Total Homeless - 1,321

- **EMERGENCY FUNDS:** In June 2014, the City of Tacoma released its comprehensive 5 year Human Services Strategic Plan. The 2015-2019 plan created a Human Services Stabilization Fund and a Mental Health Tax Revenue Stabilization Fund to provide one-time support for critical human services that either 1) face significant service reductions, or 2) address an emerging human services need.
- **STATE OF EMERGENCY:** In June of 2016 The Tacoma City Council approved a motion that implemented two non-consecutive mitigation sites and one stability site as part of the Temporary Emergency Aid and Shelter Plan for an investment of up to \$3.4 million. The City's investment was funded through a combination of \$1.2 million in realized savings from 2016 as well as \$2.2 million from a sale of a Tacoma Rail Mountain Division Property.
- **THREE PHASE PLAN:** In order to immediately reduce the negative impacts of homelessness in Tacoma, the City implemented a plan which starts with basic mitigation and moves people to transitional housing in 3 steps.



VANCOUVER COUNTY SEAT

Population – Clark County 467,918

Vancouver 174,826 (2016)

PIT Numbers for Clark 2017– Unsheltered 269

Total Homeless – 749

- **HOME FUND:** In May of 2015, the City of Vancouver convened a 21 member task force to look at homelessness in the City. A levy which imposes a tax of \$0.36 per \$1,000 of assessed property value & generates \$42 million over seven years was proposed to Council on February 22, 2016, and was passed by voters on November 8, 2016.
- **DAY CENTER:** In late December 2017, after a public hearing, the City was approved to purchase (with levy funds) a former Fish & Wildlife building in central Vancouver where it will open a new 5000 sq ft Day Center. The Center will be a continuation of the current day center, which is inadequate to the need and has no showers, bathrooms, or laundry. Share (nonprofit) will run the new Day Center. <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/ced/page/day-center-people-who-are-homeless>

EUGENE COUNTY SEAT

Population – Lane County 369,519

Eugene 166,575 (2016)

PIT Numbers for Lane 2017 – Unsheltered 1,003

Total Homeless – 1529

- **MICRO HOUSING & INNOVATIONS:** In December 2012, Eugene City Council took action to locate a pilot project for low-cost micro housing on City owned property. The site was developed with 29 micro temporary housing units and common bath, kitchen and gathering spaces. The site has capacity to serve up to 35 people at any one time and has served 85 residents since its creation. Over the last several years, Lane County has embraced new and innovative community housing options in response to the growing need for safe places for people to sleep. Some of the new approaches include Rest Stops, Transitional Micro Housing, and Safe Spots.
- **STATE FUNDING:** In 2016, the Oregon legislature created a new way to generate funding that can be used for affordable housing through the adoption of Senate Bill (SB) 1533. As a result of this legislation, local jurisdictions may choose to: 1) adopt a tax on construction permits (called a Construction Excise Tax or “CET”) to generate revenue for affordable housing; and 2) implement inclusionary housing requirements (commonly called inclusionary zoning or “IZ”).
- **HOME FUND:** Eugene may adopt a construction excise tax to support affordable housing. The tax may not exceed 1% for residential construction; there is no limit on the rate for commercial or industrial construction. The tax is assessed on the permit valuation of the improvements. The land value is not included. For residential construction, it includes both new construction and improvements to existing structures that add square footage to the living space.

NOTABLE INNOVATIONS BY MUNICIPALITIES OUTSIDE OF PNW

MADISON, WI STATE CAPITAL

Population – Dane County 523,643
PIT Numbers for Dane County 2017 – Unsheltered 515

Madison 252,551 (2016)
Total Homeless – 1066

BEACON HOUSE DAY CENTER

- **BROAD PARTNERSHIPS:** The Beacon opened in October 2017, as created by a partnership of business, faith-based service providers, law enforcement as convened by Catholic Charities Madison (CCM). As a result, there are strong, trust-based relationships between all 3 sectors dedicated to working together to meet the needs of homeless people and to mitigate negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.
- **RESPONSE TO NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS:** Soon after opening, CCM and the Madison Police Department (MPD) found that social predators were preying on program participants and developed a plan of action to make predators un-welcome. CCM instituted a “Code of Conduct” to communicate behavior standards to all participants. CCM staff wear blue shirts, volunteers wear yellow shirts in order to clarify roles and identify who will respond to negative behavior(s). CCM also hired 2 security guards to serve as safety monitors. MPD has a neighborhood officer who walks through at least daily & works closely with the staff at Beacon.
- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** CCM obtained a “Conditional Use Permit” rather than a “Good Neighbor Plan” to guide the operation of the Day Center in a way that minimizes negative impacts. CCM's CEO meets with businesses in groups or individually, and recently held their first community meeting with stakeholders. Downtown Madison Inc (DMI) also hosted business community meetings on homelessness in general & the Day Center in particular.
- **DESIGNED FOR SAFETY:** The design of the original facility embodies many Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts. MPD is working with DMI to identify the foot traffic pathways to the facility to evaluate CPTED issues and to recommend safety improvements - i.e. lighting, line of sight etc.

AUSTIN, TX – AUSTIN RESOURCE CENTER FOR THE HOMELESS (ARCH)

http://designresourcesforhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Austin-FINAL_7_2017.pdf

- **ARCH is designed to assess client needs**, provide information on how and where to access services, and meet the basic emergency needs of homeless adults. The Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) serves as the first point of entry into the homeless social service system for many of Austin’s adults experiencing homelessness. The ARCH also provides sleeping areas for homeless people to rest, day or night, and a Day Resource Center to get out of the elements during the day. More than **6,000 homeless men and women** utilized the ARCH in 2016-2017, averaging approximately 423 individuals each day in the Day Resource Center and sleeping more than 230 men each night. Austin used extensive design intervention methodologies to build a center that is comfortable and which enhances calmness for clients.

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OF MULTIPLE NW AND NATIONAL MODELS FOR MUNICIPAL INTERVENTIONS ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS IS AVAILABLE FROM CPD HOUSING.