

Listening Sessions

Olympia Homelessness Response | Compiled High Level Summaries

The City of Olympia is hosting conversations as part of the Homelessness Response process. Enclosed are the high level summaries for:

- March 28 | Community Resource Providers Listening Session
- April 18 | Downtown Community Listening Session
- April 20 | Community Workshop at Olympia High School Listening Session
- May 4 | Community Workshop at Capital High School Listening Session
- May 29 | City Employees Listening Session
- May 31 | Downtown Property Owners Focus Group
- June 3 | Plum Street Village Residents Listening Session
- June 6 | Downtown Business Focus Group
- June 10 | Individuals Experiencing Homelessness Listening Session
- June 30 | Evergreen Community Listening Session

You can find copies of the individual high summaries on engageolympia.com

Last updated 8.13.2019

Phase One

Community Resource Providers Listening Session

Olympia Homelessness Response Plan

March 28, 2019 High-Level Listening Session Summary



On March 28, 2019 the City of Olympia convened a listening session with approximately 80 community resource providers. Participants were asked to consider what does it look like to successfully address homelessness in our community, and what are the barriers to success? Below is a high level summary of what we heard:

Areas of Agreement

- Everyone is impacted by homelessness in one way or another
- Success will be defined by creation of more and more accessible affordable housing
- Success is contingent on access to housing-first solutions and access to essential services
- Success will require better coordinated system and service delivery (among jurisdictions and organizations)
- The stigma of homelessness is a significant barrier to community acceptance and solutions
- Future progress will require expanded community involvement and understanding
- Any response must include trauma-informed approaches and solutions
- Reasons for homelessness are varied, and there is no uniform solution
- The system may be too confusing to start or navigate for many of those in need

Areas of Disagreement

- Whether we should drive people to specific housing options
- Whether police interaction is necessary
- Whether success = making progress on homelessness vs. ending homelessness
- What system (vulnerability index or other) to use to prioritize need and funding
- Whether systems are structured to help the homeless or protect the housed population
- Whether our local social service “carrying-capacity” is being strained by people coming here to seek those services

Areas to Learn More

- Better understanding the root causes of homelessness and functional solutions
- How the response system works now, and how to address gaps or shortcomings
- Involving those experiencing homelessness in the development of solutions
- How to reasonably fund or otherwise resource effective response mechanisms
- How to incentivize or otherwise encourage the construction of affordable housing, taking into account challenges posed by the private market and limits on where certain types of housing can be built

Transcribed Listening Sessions

Would you like to see all the input that was collected and transcribed from the listening session? Contact Stacey Ray at sray@ci.olympia.wa.us or 360.753.8046

Stay Connected



Stay Informed: Sign up for our e-news at olympiawa.gov/subscribe



Engage: Ask questions & share ideas at engageolympia.com



Contact Us: Email us at homelessness@ci.olympia.wa.us



Learn More: Visit our webpage at olympiawa.gov/homelessness

Downtown Community Listening Session

Olympia Homelessness Response Plan

April 18, 2019 High-Level Listening Sessions Summary



On April 18, 2019 the City convened a listening session with approximately 90 members of the Downtown community. Participants were asked how homelessness impacts them, what it looks like to successfully address homelessness Downtown, and what they perceive to be barriers to success. Here is a high-level summary of what we heard:

Areas of Agreement

- Want to feel proud of my community and clean it up
- Existing businesses' ability to succeed or simply stay in business is impacted
- Don't want to see demise of community icons and special places (e.g. Hands-on Children's Museum)
- Have been personally threatened or driven away
- Families no longer feel safe visiting Downtown
- Homelessness negatively impacts the environment (e.g. clean water)
- Mitigation site (growing homeless population and intense concentration in one location) has accelerated impacts and urgency of response
- The costs for Emergency medical responders, police, and service agencies to respond is unsustainable
- Don't think people should have to live like that (or their children); everyone should have place to live
- There have to be common-sense, middle-ground solutions
- Want ALL people to be treated with respect and understanding
- Help people find pathways to self-sufficiency with easy access to services
- Want to help people who want help (homelessness vs. lawlessness)
- There are root and spontaneous (job loss, domestic violence, rent increases, etc.) causes of homelessness; need to address accordingly
- The State and County have to help
- This challenge is overwhelming and difficult to discuss, let alone solve
- Voter and taxpayer fatigue due to no measurable or demonstrated impact

Areas of Disagreement

- Police officers are not empowered to act and enforce the laws
- Relative effectiveness/impact of camp sweeps (i.e. Do people just go somewhere else? Does the sweep just exacerbate their situation?)
- Resentment that there's greater concern that "people don't want to go Downtown," when homeless suffering is more important
- Resentment that "people can't go Downtown" because of aggressive behavior, needles, panhandling, etc.
- Whether bathrooms should be left unlocked (safety/security vs. dignity)
- Whether homelessness is preventing investment/economic activity Downtown
- Ability of a small Downtown to financially absorb and support solutions – e.g. too many homeless individuals in a relatively confined space, ability of small businesses to afford security, taxes and other response costs
- Where social services should be located (Downtown vs. spread around county)
- Appropriate role of society in responding to homelessness
- Appropriate balance between supporting homeless vs. waste, crime, health (i.e. how much do we invest in addressing homelessness while also having to fund increasing costs associated with public health and safety?)
- Appropriate balance of drug enforcement, drug treatment and rehabilitation
- Impacts to and role of community institutions (Library, City, Churches, etc.)
- What it means to "hold people accountable"

continues on back

Areas of Disagreement Continued

- Community members choose not to engage in solutions because an “angry/aggressive” crowd doesn’t allow for a real dialogue
- The role of a capitalist economy in causing homelessness
- Whether responders are trained to administer assistance homeless need
- Role of parenting and individual decision-making that leads to homelessness
- Resistance of “housed” to supporting solutions for unhoused (“not in my backyard”)


Areas to Learn More


- Want to learn about peer community solution success stories and failures
- Want to know what the City’s response will be over long-term
- Want to know how we’re going to measure success
- How private companies can participate and invest in solutions
- How churches/others can impact, balance solutions with downtown viability
- Better defined pathways and steps to permanent housing solutions
- Role of affordable housing solutions in solving the challenge
- Whether creating jobs, offering counseling, training and schooling works
- Why people don’t “move along” when shelter beds exist
- Whether “lack of funding” is the primary barrier to solutions
- People don’t understand “human side” of homelessness: info and education
- Need to hear from houseless individuals in a conversation about solutions
- Lack of understanding that US Government slashed support for low-wage people
- How do people with chronic health issues live on \$157/mo.?
- Why don’t we establish “umbrella” fund vs. multiple small funds to solve problem?
- Why can’t we set aside land to create affordable, temporary housing solutions?

Transcribed Listening Sessions

Would you like to see all the input that was collected and transcribed from the listening session? Contact Stacey Ray at sray@ci.olympia.wa.us or 360.753.8046

Stay Connected

 **Stay Informed:** Sign up for our e-news at olympiawa.gov/subscribe

 **Engage:** Ask questions & share ideas at engageolympia.com

 **Contact Us:** Email us at homelessness@ci.olympia.wa.us

 **Learn More:** Visit our webpage at olympiawa.gov/homelessness



Participants discuss the workshop questions and record their answers.



Community Workshop Listening Sessions

Olympia Homelessness Response Plan

April 20, 2019 High-Level Listening Session Summary



The City of Olympia convened a community workshop on April 20, 2019, at Olympia High School. Approximately 115 community members participated in a conversation about how homelessness impacts them, what it means to successfully address homelessness in our community, and barriers to success. Below is a high level summary of what we heard:

Areas of Agreement

- People want to be part of the solution, but don't see a clear or meaningful way to participate
- People are feeling shut-out or afraid of engaging in discussions about solutions because conversations aren't managed or respectful
- Homelessness has spread beyond Downtown and residents are reporting an increase in thefts, aggressive panhandling and drug paraphernalia in parks and neighborhoods
- Residents are increasingly upset the City is being "trashed" and feeling less safe doing routine activities (examples: going to the park, riding the bus, using trails, going downtown)
- Growing concern about detrimental environmental impacts (examples: water pollution, needles, forests, garbage)
- People expect a shared effort to preserve a vibrant Downtown, eliminate camps and reduce crime
- Success means the vast majority of unsheltered people (excluding those who don't want shelter) have somewhere to live, and no children live outside or in unstable shelters
- Solutions require easy and adequate access to medical treatment, mental health resources, job training and accountability/support through case management
- People understand the causes of homelessness are complex (examples: attitudes, drug abuse, lack of affordable housing, lack of skills, etc.)
- There's a desire to ensure "all" people are/feel safe (housed and houseless)
- General support for creating or incentivizing a range of housing solutions

Areas of Disagreement

- While participants agree social service support (and the recent increase in investment) is well-intentioned, there's some disagreement whether it's "helping" or "enabling" the situation
- Uncertainty about the public's willingness to develop or invest in solutions versus resistance to it
- Some believe the impacts of "lawlessness" and "dangerous behavior" has exceeded the public's ability or interest to continue supporting services versus moving more towards law enforcement solutions
- Fatigue over "repeat customers" – people unwilling or unable to accept assistance
- Frustration with lack of measurable outcomes to show progress
- Disagreement over the "major" causes of homelessness; for example, widespread systemic causes versus individuals' poor decision-making. And a resulting "lack of empathy" or "resentment of enablers"
- Conflict regarding providing continued support versus where to draw the line on preserving livability for those whose taxes help fund solutions
- Disagreement over "camps" and "mitigation sites," and whether "people have a right to live/sleep somewhere safe" vs. whether "property owners" have a right to "preserve their investment" and feel safe
- Disparate opinions on "free will" vs. "unmitigated drug culture"
- What to do with people who "don't want to be helped" or "refuse to be a respectful citizen"
- Disagreement over whether federal funding or local investment should drive solutions, and the role funding solutions plays in the spike in homelessness

continues on back

Areas of Disagreement Continued

- Whether homeless camp “sweeps” solve or “exacerbate” the problem
- Whether increasing funding or agency presence will truly solve the problem


Areas to Learn More


- How to help and truly make a difference. Can we develop a citizen-base mentorship program?
- Facilitating childhood preschool access for kids experiencing homelessness
- Collective action is tough. How do we work this out as human beings?
- Interest in how other communities address this challenge
- Are there upstream solutions? Examples given included: affordable housing, eviction prevention, etc
- Can we repurpose existing buildings or identify vacant parcels to supply affordable housing solutions?
- Will multistory projects with onsite service providers and a strong mentor program work?
- What is the role of the WA State Department of Transportation? They own considerable chunks of property here with encampments located on them
- How to increase awareness of the causes of homelessness, and support solutions?
- How are we going to measure progress?
- If prior offenses are a major problem to homeless solutions, what can we do to create barrier-free housing options?


Transcribed Listening Sessions

Would you like to see all the input that was collected and transcribed from the listening session? Contact Stacey Ray at sray@ci.olympia.wa.us or 360.753.8046

Stay Connected

 Stay Informed: Sign up for our e-news at olympiawa.gov/subscribe

 Engage: Ask questions & share ideas at engageolympia.com

 Contact Us: Email us at homelessness@ci.olympia.wa.us

 Learn More: Visit our webpage at olympiawa.gov/homelessness



Participants discuss the workshop questions and record their answers.



May 4, 2019 High-Level Listening Sessions Summary



The City of Olympia convened a community workshop on May 4, 2019, at Capital High School. Approximately 75 community members participated in a conversation about how homelessness impacts them, what it means to successfully address homelessness in our community, and barriers to success. Below is a high level summary of what we heard:

Areas of Agreement

- Feeling overwhelmed by the scope of the challenge to respond to homelessness; a desire to hear from others and find ways to help
- Growing concern about public health impacts
- People should not have to live in the streets, period
Success = functional zero homeless
- All people should have access to basic necessities, including shelter, security, healthcare, mental health resources and drug treatment
- The rapid surge in homelessness has desensitized some to the plight of the homeless population, and there's a sense people are becoming angry or discouraged by crime, trash and other effects
- There is no broad-brush solution to address the complex reasons behind homelessness
- Growing concern for impacts on the environment
- Acute concern over degradation of Downtown, and a reluctance to visit
- Growing perception that this is not just an Olympia problem, but a national epidemic
- More can be done "upstream" to prevent homelessness
- Need more, easier access to drug treatment and mental health services
- Many are torn between compassion (want to help) and anger (no longer feel safe in their community)
- More help is needed from the State and Federal Government (financial investment and policies)
- For many, the challenge is affordability – i.e. they work but can no longer keep up with rent prices)

Areas of Disagreement

- Divergent perceptions about the causes of homelessness (participant examples: unfair capitalist society, neoliberal policies, stagnant wages, personal decisions, bad luck, etc.)
- Concern that the police are not enforcing laws or are not allowed to.
- Disagreement whether many homeless individuals are from Olympia (even if they say they are in surveys)
- Agreement that homelessness reflects poorly on community, but disagreement on how – e.g. because we have not stepped up to help the vulnerable versus we how allow or enable lawless behavior
- Whether we are applying the right combination of tools to address the challenge (participant examples: The Home Fund only addresses 80% AMI (average medium income), not enough funding available for rapid rehousing, for every 30 low-income housing units built, there are 100 families that remain unsheltered, etc.)
- Concern that solutions will remain elusive if conversations are driven by anger versus the perception that anger drives action and solutions
- Disagreement on whether or not camp removals clean up the City versus destroying people's personal items and sense of security
- How much to invest in homelessness versus other critical community issues and needs
- Conflicting views on providing public bathrooms—it is a human right and dignity issue to have access to restrooms versus they attract criminal behavior
- Whether it's possible to ever build enough "tiny homes" to serve everyone who needs them (and whether that would, in turn, attract more homeless to Olympia and Thurston County)

continues on back

Areas of Disagreement Continued

- Whether the homeless population should be concentrated around services, or provided spaces throughout the community
- How much (taxes) the public should be asked to invest in solutions
- Resentment and/or mistrust between different groups (non-profits, private sector, government, tax payers) responding to homelessness

Areas to Learn More

- Ideas to create affordable housing solutions or limit rent increases
- How churches and other community groups can help with the annual Point-in-Time survey or other initiatives
- Explanation and community training with respect to “trauma-informed care”
- What a successful “transitional housing” program might look like
- The role publicly owned housing should play in the overall solution
- General interest in learning more about any/all “best practices”
- Appropriate roles for different community groups and organizations (e.g. clean-up teams, mentoring, basic necessity provision, etc.)
- Whether a “reward for progress” system would help people transition back into society
- Whether there are response models that include job training and built-in housing, and if so, whether they are working as a more permanent solution
- Whether investing more into transitional housing programs with long-term case management would help reduce the volume of homeless and those cycling back into homelessness
- Whether a “one-stop” intake center would facilitate assessment, service connections, partner coordination and longer-term solutions

Transcribed Listening Sessions

Would you like to see all the input that was collected and transcribed from the listening session? Contact Stacey Ray at sray@ci.olympia.wa.us or 360.753.8046

Stay Connected



Stay Informed: Sign up for our e-news at olympiawa.gov/subscribe



Engage: Ask questions & share ideas at engageolympia.com



Contact Us: Email us at homelessness@ci.olympia.wa.us



Learn More: Visit our webpage at olympiawa.gov/homelessness



Participants discuss the workshop questions and record their answers.



Olympia City Employees Listening Session

Olympia Homelessness Response Plan

May 29, 2019 High-Level Listening Sessions Summary



On May 29, 2019, City of Olympia staff were engaged in a conversation about homelessness. The purpose was to better understand the unique perspective and impacts being felt by City staff, both in their personal lives and at work. The discussion included questions about how homelessness impacts the participants, what they think success looks like and what the barriers to success are.

Below is a high level summary of what we heard:

Question 1 – Why are You Here and How Does Homelessness Impact You?

Came to Learn

- Curiosity and interest in others views
- As an employee, I'm curious what steps the City is taking to best address homelessness
- To gain a better understanding of who and what department does what?
- Make sure I have as much information as I can on the topic
- To learn about other ideas on how to help

Personal Impacts

- I encounter homeless people while walking Downtown – to and from work, shopping, and when taking a walk
- Sometimes I'm confronted while walking through Downtown (panhandling, comments, confrontational)
- My taxes have increased to support the Home Fund
- Feelings of anger at seeing unmanaged encampments (under the bridge, railroad tracks)
- Frustration that time/resources etc. are consumed by this
- Frustration that it's all mostly harm reduction rather than improving our community
- Homelessness impacts me because I care about the local businesses Downtown. Social services that use low barrier structures are Downtown, and drug-induced individuals with inappropriate behavior go into stores and harass employees and shoppers
- Sense of societal and Federal failure on this problem
- I love living in Olympia, raising my family here, and growing up here
- Personally, I want to feel proud of my City and right now I'm more

ashamed and disappointed

- I have lived here my whole life and I'm embarrassed to bring out of town guests to the Downtown area
- I help at a satellite food bank which serves many in the Homeless Community
- I see the suffering and the crime (vandalism)
- Residents in my neighborhood including myself are picking up the pieces, filling in the gaps, housing homeless youth

Concerns about Safety

- Safety concerns for family, children
- I live near Downtown and am feeling more unsafe than ever when I'm walking with my family
- I no longer visit Downtown on my time off
- I no longer feel comfortable walking Downtown. Will not go by myself
- It is a concern with needles and impacts my children's ability to play freely
- As a family, we avoid high drug areas more than high areas of concentrated homelessness
- My ability to move through the public sphere by walking, biking, or taking the bus has been circumscribed by the threatening behavior of a small group of people. I want to be and feel safe in public space outside of my car
- People that are wandering around our neighborhood seem like they are scouting for goodies
- Why am I raising my children around this

Continues on back

Question 1 Continued

Work Impacts

- Homelessness continues to be a topic when meeting with business owner's Downtown
- Problem identifying who has what when responding to public records requests
- It impacts the jail due to crime because of homelessness, then it's compiled due to the mental health issues
- I am concerned about how people that are unsheltered impact how the sidewalks appear. Cleanup is part of my job
- It impacts my work, safety of staff with needles everywhere in meter boxes and right of way, along with feces
- Homelessness impacts my job because of impacts to water quality. Has an environmental impact that may seem bigger than it actually is

Question 2 – What Does Success Look Like?

- Our City being a role model to others
- Create community success
- Not spend all the City's money on homelessness
- Take care of those in our community without being an attraction for more
- Education opportunities for people to learn more
- Understanding and de-escalation
- Solving the opioid crisis
- Perhaps opportunities within my job to contribute – volunteer shifts or other ways?
- Less homelessness in general
- Less calls from community
- Everyone that needs help can get it

A Regional Approach

- Regional/State/Federal coordination and help with this issue that goes way beyond City government
- Regionally located services – not all services should be in the Downtown shopping core
- An interdisciplinary network of partnerships within an organizational and functional structure to address and mitigate the primary causes of homelessness so that people at risk of or experiencing homelessness can be divested to a stable living situation

More Affordable Housing

- More affordable housing
- More tiny housing; maybe tiny apartments
- Everyone having a safe place to sleep at night that doesn't involve alcoves and under bridges
- Progression of housing options available - supportive housing
- Ability to share info about where/how to get in queue for housing options
- Developers partnering with City to provide % housing (affordable, low-income)

- I've heard too many fellow employees express frustration and concerns for their safety in the discussion topic of homelessness, lawlessness, poor behavior, addiction and related subjects. I've heard stories about employees avoiding their own Downtown because of various reasons related to homelessness
- Homelessness impacts the resources of my department

Impacts to Citizens

- I am here today to be able to communicate to others when they complain about how homelessness looks in Olympia. I would like to share about the positive like the tiny houses
- I work at the police dept. and get a lot of calls
- Citizens ask me what the City is doing about it
- I want to be able to have difficult conversation with contractors and business owners

Support Services

- More detox beds/mental health beds
- City helps provide basics of everyday life maintenance – laundry, showers, solid waste
- Activities and safe places for youth
- More job help/training/apprenticeships
- Neighborhood employing youth –handy people, housework, yard work
- Services provided to help homeless make better choices. Perhaps developing something to get to the bottom of why they are homeless, what they need to not be homeless, and skills to continue to be successful
- Coordinated response by all partners – beds at rehab centers
- Fix the insurance reimbursement so mental health providers are still practicing
- Programs that don't draw people from far outside our area

Better Communication

- Provide more public communication, which motivates residents to step up
- Provide staff appropriate and helpful responses for community member questions
- Continue sharing message with public through social media. Keep updating on progress

Clean and Safe Community

- No unmanaged camps/garbage piles
- Cleaner environment; not seeing clothes and debris strung out along sidewalks; reduction in needles; no needles in storm drains
- Decreased drug sales, usage and paraphernalia
- Safety and security for staff
- My co-workers feeling safe and regaining the ability to enjoy the City
- See and feel a change in the City of prosperity, cleanliness and reduction of crime

Question 2 Continued

Less Visible Homelessness

- To no longer see people sleeping on the sidewalks, panhandling
- No longer see people walking with grocery carts filled with everything they own, wandering aimlessly
- To be able to walk at least 3 blocks without being asked for money
- Ability to perform other aspects of my job
- Being able to perform my other job responsibilities that I have put on the back burner. Most of the job is homelessness related now
- Not being hassled by homeless while at work
- Not having to deal with the waste homelessness generates
- Not hearing from businesses about the problems and troubles they have with this
- Ability to promote other efforts

See a Change Downtown

- A clean, walkable, unthreatening Downtown. Tangible and visible progress that can be shown and discussed with people critical of Downtown
- To walk Downtown at least 3 blocks and not have to see someone drugged out sitting by a business
- Be able to go Downtown and have business owners happy and prosperous
- Increased Downtown tourism

Question 3 – What are the Barriers to Success?

Lack of:

- A shared vision
- A plan, and an organizational/procedural structure
- Resources. Lack of resources for the real issues surrounding homelessness
- Affordable housing
- Services and beds for mental illness and drug/alcohol addiction
- Follow through and follow-up

Magnitude of the Problem

- There are too many homeless at once
- Population is increasing rapidly
- Complexity of homeless population. Diverse reasons why people are homeless – drug treatment may not work; mental health issues
- We have the majority of programs so other communities say “go to Olympia”

Public Sentiment

- Divisive public sentiment, extreme views, anger and close mindedness
- Stereotyping homeless people. Full picture of individuals as homeless is incomplete – more are not criminals than criminals
- Neighborhood opposition – not in my backyard
- Fear
- Lack of understanding/compassion
- Me vs. We attitudes

- Better lighting Downtown

Accountability/Enforcement

- Homelessness feels like the wrong word. My frustration is lawlessness or our forced acceptance of a substandard expectation of behavior
- Make a distinction between lawless behavior and ‘down on luck’ or can’t afford housing situations
- Consequences for illegal behaviors – remove predators from camps
- Personal accountability to work with programs to move out of homelessness
- The law can’t criminalize homeless but it can criminalize public drug use, theft, and violence
- Eliminate double standards: littering is a crime for all; drugs are a crime for all; living next to a stream without proper waste removal is a crime
- Olympia should not be a destination for homeless. They need to be an asset to the community if they choose to be here
- Accountability for social services

Economic & Social issues

- Minimum wage still not enough money to afford rent, food, transportation, or medical
- Someone’s making money off of it – cartel drug trade
- Free shelter, food, clothes allows money spent on drugs
- Big picture economic/social issues – racism, opioids, automation, social change
- Federal policy decisions for the last 30+ years that have resulted in an economy that serves the 1% and leave the majority of us economically disempowered
- Education
- It’s hard to engage the community when we are all busy with our own lives
- Changing behaviors is difficult. Getting the homeless to not want to be homeless and reenter society

Lack of Accountability

- Some want to live free from rules and norms of society
- Those that don’t want help are huge barriers, then they become barriers for others that might want help for fear of losing their “family.” No consequences for their actions.
- The inability to fine and/or force individuals to respect the community
- Inability to hold social service groups accountable
- How to help those that don’t want it

Question 3 Continued

Lack of Enforcement

- I've heard law enforcement has been told not to address some of the issues
- Criminal justice system; there are hassles associated with arresting/enforcing

Lack of Regional Participation and Coordination

- This is a regional issue with localized efforts. The City can't solve this alone
- Not everybody is helping. Lack of commitment from other stakeholders: hospitals, service providers, and county.
- Complete lack of interest on federal and state level
- Lack of participation by homeless and community.
- Social service providers not working with each other or the City.
- Lack of coordination and accessibility of resources and information

Other Barriers

- Most providers in Oly Downtown have in-patient facilities and programs for rehab and mental health (current timelines too short to be effective long term).
- Enforcing old, outdated municipal codes that regulate housing and amenities
- City Council - Politics are trumping good governance
- Community Care Center opening Downtown was the beginning of the end

Quotes

- "I value hearing people's lived experiences with an issue and find putting myself in others' shoes."
- "It impacts me because I hate to see people suffer, to worry they are cold or hungry, or in need of something basic but out of reach."
- "It impacts me because I live a mile from Downtown and work Downtown so I see it every time I leave my house. The problems associated with it are constantly in my face."
- "As a City employee, homelessness has had a huge impact on my work and the work of many City employees."
- "Homelessness is now part of my work. I've learned a lot about the issue and have a better understanding of its causes."
- "When leaving to go home, I see what is along the railroad and I get pissed at it all. I have changed and don't have as much compassion as I used to because I don't see the change."
- I can't believe that in our society there are people living in the woods/sidewalks – it's wrong and shocking and I hate it.
- "It seems like if you "support" people who are homeless you're part of the problem. If you don't support the problem, you're also part of the problem. There is no in between."

4 of 4

Transcribed Listening Sessions

Would you like to see all the input that was collected and transcribed from the listening session? Contact Stacey Ray at sray@ci.olympia.wa.us or 360.753.8046

Stay Connected



Stay Informed: Sign up for our e-news at olympiawa.gov/subscribe



Engage: Ask questions & share ideas at engageolympia.com



Contact Us: Email us at homelessness@ci.olympia.wa.us



Learn More: Visit our webpage at olympiawa.gov/homelessness

Downtown Property Owners Focus Group

Olympia Homelessness Response Plan

May 31, 2019 High-Level Listening Sessions Summary



On May 31, 2019, the City hosted a conversation with a focus group of Downtown property owners and managers. The purpose was to better understand the unique perspective and impacts being felt by these members of the Downtown community. The discussion included questions about what is currently working to address homelessness and its impacts, what is not working, and what might be the next best steps to address the crisis.

Below is a high level summary of what we heard:

Personal Experiences & Observations

- The Downtown community of property and business owners is compassionate, but they get put in a box and perceived as a certain way. It would be nice to speak freely in the open without the fear of vandalism or other repercussions
- We talk about the trauma of homeless individuals, and that's real. But also realize property owners have experienced or are experiencing trauma, too
- People perceive that Downtown business owners are wealthy, and don't care about how their behaviors impact them. That is not the case
- "I took clients to The Washington Center last week, and a guy was urinating by my building – he smiled at us . . . and walked away. I found a huge pile of feces by my door, and the story about that has traveled. People are asking me about it."
- "Bullet holes and etching are commonplace on my building. [It costs] \$24,600 to replace windows. You put up with so much Downtown you wouldn't have to otherwise. My clients think I'm crazy for locating in Downtown."
- I invested my life savings in a Downtown building, and it has become increasingly difficult to get a business to lease or stay here
- I notice like 60% of people on Franklin Street at 5:00 PM are struggling—walking to the Community Care Center
- Every day I hear from families who say they won't come Downtown with their kids. They are afraid of finding needles, or witnessing screaming or violence
- Older Downtown residents are afraid to go outside

Response and Enforcement

- Drugs are the number one cause of problems Downtown, not just for businesses, but also for homeless individuals trying to get on their feet or just stay safe
- Police have had their "hands tied." There's a lack of response, and when there is one, it's very late
- There's a sense of unfair treatment and enforcement. Example: "Why can someone park a run-down vehicle in front of our business for months and months, but I have to secure a permit to use a power washer to clean up what they've left on the sidewalk?"
- Every Sunday morning looks like Mardi Gras just happened – I realize that isn't necessarily about homelessness, but it goes together with a lack of law enforcement
- There is a need to enforce the behaviors of homeless individuals the same as anyone else. Without fair enforcement, we lose all semblance of law. People are doing illegal things in the open. They're getting more aggressive, because they know there's no penalty. Unless someone is a threat, nothing can be done. My employees don't see the police as a way to get help
- The Downtown Ambassadors are currently only available 8 am -5 pm, Tuesday to Saturday
- There is a level of radicalism that intimidates the business community and impacts the City's response to business and property owners. There is a difference between "activism" and just doing property damage. Don't ignore the rights of business owners over activists and the homeless

Continues on back

Until you do that, getting people to support the hard decisions that need to be made will be hard

- Business owners do not know who to call for a mental health response. We need clear communication about who to call and one number.
- Police need to be seen as protectors (not warriors). I invite them in to meet my employees
- How the police responds to calls Downtown, by getting out of their cars with lights flashing, makes everyone feel unsafe (like something terrible is happening), and that impacts nearby businesses

Economic Concerns

- The non-response on the part of the City has led to an increasing desire by people to avoid Downtown. That impacts businesses, which impacts our ability to employ people. The result is reduced City revenue to pay for services
- Why aren't we marching to the Capitol talking to lawmakers about the economic impacts? They are the ones not voting for the needed services.
- [If the current situation continues] Downtown can't support small family businesses. If people want to support Downtown, they have to understand where Downtown is now

Public Health and Cleanliness

- Concern expressed about the continuing distribution of meals or food on the street (i.e. street feeds), and the public health risk of having no tables, no handwashing stations, and no bathrooms. Garbage is left everywhere
- People get food at the food bank, but have nowhere to safely prepare or store it, so much of it spoils or gets dumped
- Residents that use the food bank and the Senior Center bring back bed bugs
- The Downtown needs more public bathrooms, charging stations, etc.

Support Services

- There's a better understanding that some people simply can't or won't have the ability to maintain steady employment or the other responsibilities that lead to an independent and stable lifestyle. Finding ways to help them with basic life management is important
- Our social service providers need to be good neighbors, too
- The location of the Community Care Center is terrible. It contributed to the shuttering of three businesses on that block, and is at the "epicenter" of what people see when they come Downtown. It is very expensive to run—costing \$1.5M for three years, but can't add hours when it would be most beneficial. Plus, it's not good for people who access services there, who get honked at or receive nasty stares since they're in the middle of a major corridor."
- The more services we have, the more we hang onto people that like living here for free and easily – that's why I think the population is growing (group expresses general agreement)
- Support expressed for helping those homeless individuals who want help, but concerned that there is a percentage for which this is a lifestyle choice. How do you address those individuals?
- Why have homeless numbers increased so rapidly? How can we keep up with resource demand?

- Recognition that you can't just 'shoo' away people with mental or drug issues, but unsure where they go
- If we truly approached this as a crisis, we would house people quickly. Let's advocate for the needed resources
- There's a need to step up treatment programs and counseling, or "this will continue forever."
- The City can't do it all. This is a state and federal problem, as well.
- Would like to see the Community Care Center open more after 5 pm and an expanded presence throughout the City (not just Downtown). That gives people a place to direct homeless individuals who need assistance or basic necessities (like drinking water) after hours

Next Steps

- We need data to determine the extent of the need, so as to determine the right approaches and the amount of resources needed to address the problem
- Part of being compassionate is holding people responsible. It's not an "either-or" thing. A social contract has been broken
- This community won't come to a consensus, at some point City Council will need to make policy decisions
- Support expressed for the idea of rotating church sites (to reduce a burden on any one neighborhood)
- Consider a "Night Mayor" concept where someone is always on-hand to make critical decisions and coordinate with law enforcement on policy decisions
- Good urban design can help create more comfortable spaces

Transcribed Listening Sessions

Would you like to see all the input that was collected and transcribed from the listening session? Contact Stacey Ray at sray@ci.olympiawa.us or 360.753.8046

Stay Connected



Stay Informed: Sign up for our e-news at olympiawa.gov/subscribe



Engage: Ask questions & share ideas at engageolympia.com



Contact Us: Email us at homelessness@ci.olympiawa.us



Learn More: Visit our webpage at olympiawa.gov/homelessness

Residents of Plum Street Village Listening Session

Olympia Homelessness Response Plan

June 3, 2019 High-Level Listening Session Summary



On June 3, 2019 the City of Olympia convened a listening session with approximately 18 houseless individuals who are currently a resident at the Plum Street Tiny House Village. Participants were asked to share what is working and not working and what it means to successfully address homelessness in our community. Below is a high level summary of what we heard:

What's Working

- Stable place to stay. Opportunity to build confidence
- Access to food, job, emotional and medical support
- Confirmation that Olympia is a friendlier place than most
- People are met "at their place" here
- Connection to WorkSource
- Collaborative environment
- Connection to Sidewalk for more permanent housing solution; BHR, others for service needs
- Case management
- Clear rules and "gated" community
- Access to bus passes
- Clothing from Mission
- The Revival model in Aberdeen: work 30 hrs./mo. and live rent-free
- Community Care Center offers respite, safe place for those without other options
- Oxford House
- Coordinated activities at mitigation site
- Ability to be evaluated for treatment
- Place to get clean, allowed to keep pets
- Plum Street makes you want to give back, help build more tiny house villages
- Providence is working - UGM (very helpful)

What's Not Working

- How housed community treats us like non-citizens
- Jobs/lack of opportunities (need income before housing) (tough on fixed income)
- Tough to find a family site - need more options for individual situations (e.g. single dad); need place that can accommodate folks who may get their child in the future (but don't have this now)
- Plum Street: Can't come back when kicked out - maybe change to 30-day break. Need 2nd chance
- Don't know how/where to get dental care
- Some are unwilling to conform to housing options with rules. Pressure doesn't work
- Don't have bus money
- Need help with paperwork, transportation to services
- Mental health is a different level of challenge and needs to be treated as such
- We have to work harder to find employment for felons. Can't do it on their own
- Limited space at Plum Street. Hard to hold a job from a tent
- Need basic skills training: personal finance, hygiene, computers, etc
- Avenue B Camp = hell
- Need 7 days/week cooling and warming at CCC
- No refrigeration/freezer access
- More counseling needs to come from peers, people who have experienced this
- Don't give out needles - pissed off; more addicts; more problems
- Night security downtown (more of it)


Continues on back


- Provide more safe locations for their “stuff” belongings
- Restrictive open times at shelters
- Working with churches can be hard
- Lots of homeless youth; family kicked them out; ran away


Top Recommendations

- More jobs/opportunities for homeless raises up whole community
- Lack of fairness/equality of treatment in the justice system continues to negatively affect people years later. Need system of forgiveness, reinstatement
- Connect us to education/training
- Talk about the taboo topics - need more honest conversations, get rid of stigma - tell some stories from the community - get a face on this
- Talk about mental health issues - be open about it
- Interview skills - both build this up, and have employers understand not everyone has this skill
- Give everyone something to do
- Empathy, understanding and dignity
- Permanent housing
- Stop gentrifying town
- Drug rehab on bottom. Apartments on top; stay with work; drug free; get kids back; initiative
- There are resources but the right person isn't facilitating
- Get community to understand not all drug users
- Lots need little help
- Police are being patient
- Scared of DOC
- Transitional housing for people that just cannot afford a place until they can get an affordable place

Stay Connected

 Stay Informed: Sign up for our e-news at olympiawa.gov/subscribe

 Engage: Ask questions & share ideas at engageolympia.com

 Contact Us: Email us at homelessness@ci.olympia.wa.us

 Learn More: Visit our webpage at olympiawa.gov/homelessness



Downtown Business Focus Group

Olympia Homelessness Response Plan

June 6, 2019 High-Level Listening Sessions Summary



On June 6, 2019, the City hosted a conversation with a focus group of Downtown business owners and managers. The purpose was to better understand the unique perspective and impacts being felt by these members of the Downtown community. The discussion included questions about what is currently working to address homelessness and its impacts, what is not working, and what might be the next best steps to address the crisis.

Below is a high level summary of what we heard:

Personal Experiences

- I moved my business to a visible location on 4th Ave a few years ago. We didn't understand why people were warning us, now we understand. Block is BAD, more than once people in mental health crisis acted aggressively inside businesses in front of clients and refused to leave. Our clients have been followed into the business, we've had to call police to get them removed. We had to go to back of store and wait for police because they won't leave. I've tried strategies, I've been scared. "What is going on?" Our customers are telling each other stories, they don't want to come Downtown. We lost 50% of our business. Three employees left and we can't find new ones to replace them. It's really hard to keep a business going in Downtown. The unmanaged camping on city parking lot was a huge impact. Now we are moving to Lacey. Bummed about it, but, no other option, need to make the house payment.
- I try to keep my business open to as many people as possible, however, for the past two years the situation Downtown has become the overriding factor to everything we face. We now spend an inordinate amount of time in staff meetings figuring out how to not get taken advantage of. We are trying to balance between being open and inviting, and not digging ourselves a hole. Pretty much all of my staff have been threatened (like when they tell people they can't bring alcohol into our outdoor seating area.) People flood in twice a day to use our bathroom and drink water. Our toilet paper is constantly stolen. We had to put combo locks on the bathroom doors and remove the water and cups from the front of restaurant because it's for customers.
- I'm at ground zero (north of State.) Since the unmanaged encampments closed, incidents feel less frequent, but they seem more severe. People are trying to physically harm me now (it's not just that I'm having to move people along anymore.) People feel like they can cross my threshold. I'm alone in my office usually. I lock my door and have a note to knock, and I have mace and a tire hopper. That's my reality.
- I've lived and worked in Downtown for over 15 years, and have had a lot of one-on-one conversations with people trying to camp, breaking into my car, youth from CYS, etc., It used to be conversations about taking transit, getting dropped off with nowhere to go, but what I've noticed in the past 8 months is more fear from homeless people about crime, trying to hide, etc. – much more fear now in homeless population. Most people are addicted to opioids, lots have kids.
- We moved Downtown about 2 years ago, and are located a little off the beat and path. I feel like we are in a unique position over other businesses in that we knew what the situation was going in and established our ground rules right away, whereas other businesses had to incrementally adjust. It's harder to establish boundaries once behaviors are established. We are open to everyone, and no matter who you are if you're a jerk, you're kicked out. There was no vandalism to our outside display on May Day – feel like being taken care of by this community. My employee was threatened by a guy in a truck and a homeless person came out of nowhere to help. The impacts we have are mainly from aggressive abortion protestors. Sometimes people who obviously do not have permanent housing came in to show their art – it's beautiful. Sometimes they come in to look at the art.

Continues on back

Personal Experiences Continued

- Since the mitigation site opened, it's rare to see people camping in alcoves. Definitely hear people don't want to come Downtown. We are very welcoming to diverse population. Our business doesn't have a lot of issues with homeless, we are educated on social justice
- We're not in the Downtown core. Downtown is like a home to us; all our staff love to shop Downtown. When we initially started to feel the impact, it felt like impacts to our home. We've seen bad things – saw prostitution in an RV last year, but police said they were told to stand down. From a business owner stance, I feel responsible for my staff – benefits, pay, etc. – but then you have drug paraphernalia, feces, and young families with children, which causes us to frantically try to make sure it's safe for them. Feel victimized. Maybe if I just ask all councilmembers to have 4-5 of these dear ones camp in their front yard for a month to see the impacts. The greatest impact was the night/day warming shelter. [The person running the shelter] was fabulous, but we felt like we were drowning. There was a greater need than capacity; it was too impactful. Everyone was learning what the boundaries are. The shelter closed, but I feel bad now because these people have rights to have needs met. We do care but my employees need jobs, medical too. We've given greatly, we are merciful. We have a homeless gentleman that comes and sweeps and cleans up needles near our business; he became our friend and he helped us when the store was vandalized. We pay him, we love him. We're not impacted as much anymore due to closing of warming and cooling center and help from our houseless employee

Other Personal Observations

- Used to be located in Tumwater. The only people there who deal with homeless are cops. Tumwater cops drop people off at highway camps. Homeless are trying to get away from Olympia and find peace
- I don't want my business name out there at City Council
- There is a lot of piggy backing multiple issues on homeless
- Just went to Downtown Tacoma, but didn't see one homeless person, and didn't see any sketchy people around, it was kind of nice
- When someone's values are placed over others, it's hard
- Need more places for sober people

What are you hearing from your employees?

- Have to coach employees not to talk about negative incidents in front of clients
- My employees are asking us when our lease is up, they want to move [general agreement from the group]
- When the activist group threatens action, it scares my employees
- At closing time, employees can see people going up the block trying everyone's car door handles

Public Health and Cleanliness

- Address addicts and mental health – call it what it is, not homeless.
- Clean Team with truck is helping (phenomenal)
- People get food at food bank and throw it around the property – I'm worried about rats

Safety Concerns

- Clean and safe entrances/exits from your business is a priority. Can't be blocked by people camping
- We had to change all our lighting and need cameras
- Need better lighting Downtown (not cold LED lighting); not flood lighting from industrial parking lots
- We pay to light our corner
- How we light our buildings is important
- Certain amount of 'buck up buttercup' - learn how to navigate a City. Take personal responsibility
- Police presence on the street helps
- [City should] continue [Crisis Response] Crew

Economic Concerns

- All our primary competitors are in strip malls. Our clientele like being Downtown (shopping, eating, being close to the WA center, etc.), but young moms [needing to feel safe] is a consideration
- We need to win over people from Lacey and Tumwater to come Downtown
- Concerns about lack of affordable housing (Angelus residents just got evicted, more expensive apartments being built in Downtown)

Support Services

- "I've bought more homeless kids Greyhound tickets to go home than you know." They are stuck here and it's scary. We need a program for bus tickets. A bunch of other states are sending people here to St. Pete's
- Get people into treatment and have housing available to them when they get back (community and support systems)

City Response and Enforcement

- City is not enforcing crime. The town being run by criminals (drugs, prostitution, those taking advantage of homeless)
- It was helpful when OPD helped guide my business on what to say to help dispatch understand when a crime is being committed vs. we just feel scared
- Clean Team and Ambassadors are a huge asset. Ambassadors do magic; great if there were 2 more; relationships and ground rules are key to everything
- Ambassadors are great, but overwhelmed
- The unregulated campsite greatly impacted my life, the mitigation site is better
- A year ago, there was a real push to better connect, and the community has become more organized. We have more resources and now need to try to get them coordinated successfully. I'm seeing City staff coordinating and addressing issues first
- Parking services has changed – doing more than normal jobs. Noticed more 'eyes on street' phoning things in
- Code Enforcement being kind of awesome, great idea to address parked box truck on Legion – changed to 15 min meter

Continued next page

Continues next page

City Response and Enforcement Continued

- So grateful the Artesian Well closed. The Rangers were unable to enforce the sidewalk and three times a week large groups of people were drinking and smoking a bong there – I thought, “Why is nothing being done about this?!! It’s too much.” Park Rangers were great, but some things shouldn’t have been in their job description
- Before the park, getting water at the well was great for families who frequent my business. City taking that over was a huge mistake. Stigma of it was bad. People screaming across the street was frightening for the parents and kids. I have kids and three businesses and so couldn’t go to City Council. Just before the Artesian Park closed people were all over the sidewalk, one woman in particular had her belongings all over. It took days for her to move. I heard the police’s hands were tied to get her to move. That was really impactful, startling; I thought, “Does the City Council care about me as a small business?” Hope Artesian Commons never comes back – that was a big mistake.
- Tiny village is awesome – need 6 more of those

Next Steps

- Need proper training for folks. How to deal with next level, really violent person (neither Ambassador nor Police can deal with it)
- Peers are helping homeless people. How are they being trained to truly help, not make situation worse. Hear stories about cliques in shelters or no enforcement. People in leadership role to help homeless need training
- Little things could help (e.g. change times of shelter).
- Business community needs training on how to talk to dispatch and understanding that you call 911 [when you see someone in crisis]
- Restorative justice, but don’t know how you can do it if you’re going to start a community with a lot of people. What skill set are they being given to set up their self-governance or how to step back when triggered?

- Communication from City about what’s coming, what just happened – need much more of this digestible, positive messaging – not everyone can attend meetings. Even just a digest
- Want more conversations like this that are convenient, where you can get creative, feel safe having the conversation
- Bring Westside and state businesses into the conversation
- Why can’t Goodwill shopping center be a warming center? Set up ground rules on day 1
- Some of the frustration is vacancies, more impactful as rent of Downtown goes up
- Focus on other efforts that help Downtown:
 - Address barriers to Downtown success – will need even if tomorrow all homeless get homes. Like parking (people don’t like parallel parking)
 - Address vacancies. Do we have a vacancy ordinance – no one there to form relationships with folks. Look at the 4 corners of each intersection – is there any intersection with 4 businesses on the corner? Rules: must be open during day hours
 - Pretty things
 - Sidewalks have taken a beating
 - Wayfinding/Parking – get rid of parallel parking – people don’t know how to do it
 - Image making (Who is tooting DT’s horn?) – When you drive through Olympia, what do you see? Lights, clear alcoves, not open drug use, not camps in most visible sight, MORE seeing walking patrol; Cops should know everybody; Marketing/branding what we portray on social media, Olympian. Not enough out there to public all the time, need different stories; Olympia food and music scene, business expansions, microenterprise opportunities, punk scene is famous

Transcribed Listening Sessions

Would you like to see all the input that was collected and transcribed from the listening session? Contact Stacey Ray at sray@ci.olympia.wa.us or 360.753.8046

Stay Connected



Stay Informed: Sign up for our e-news at olympiawa.gov/subscribe



Engage: Ask questions & share ideas at engageolympia.com



Contact Us: Email us at homelessness@ci.olympia.wa.us



Learn More: Visit our webpage at olympiawa.gov/homelessness

Individuals Experiencing Homelessness Listening Session

Olympia Homelessness Response Plan

June 10, 2019 High-Level Listening Sessions Summary



On June 10 the City of Olympia convened a listening session with approximately 40 individuals experiencing homelessness at the Community Care Center. Participants were asked to share what is working and not working and what it means to successfully address homeless in our community. Below is a high level summary of what we heard:

What's Working

- Mitigation site has helped reduce personal attacks and thefts.
- Community Care Center offers laundry, showers and other resources. A safe place to go. Helps relieve stress and provides some dignity as well as a place to form community.
- Interfaith people not superficial; they earn your respect over time and don't "tell" you what to do.
- Municipalities more lenient with sleeping on street.
- Self-governance is beginning to work.
- Increase in tiny homes is helping.
- People in Olympia are receptive, helpful, willing to listen.
- Various shelter, housing and storage options including Union Gospel, Billie Frank, Senior Center, Sidewalk, PIPE, EGYHOP.
- The Day Spa was great, a good place to go in between shelter hours.
- Seeing more help with basic services: food stamps, food bank, medical services, Medicaid, Narcan, bus passes.
- Better understanding re mental health and addiction, corresponding improvement in City response.
- OPD building relationships with homeless population.
- Please look at the King County Crisis Solutions model. They provide 24/7 access for people in crisis. You're allowed to stay for 3-day, sometimes longer if you meet requirements. They also provide wrap-around services so you can get back on your feet. Sometimes people just need a few days out of the elements to get re-settled. Once you're in a better place, they provide transportation to wherever you need to go next.
- R.I.S.E. program in PDX provides you a case worker, help with rent while you get re-established.
- Drug court works - having that structure, accountability and "potential penalty" is helpful.

What's Not Working

- Access to quality employment
- Access to any housing
- Access to affordable housing
- Lack of publicly owned, rent-controlled housing
- Putting people with dementia, mental illness in tents
- Lack of medication for people with serious challenges
- Lack of options for people not allowed to live at Plum Street
- Some feel providing tiny homes to people just enables them
- Lack of access to key services: legal representation, divorce, financial literacy
- No official address at mitigation site or in the woods. Can't be official person. Can't register to vote
- Sit/lie laws: there is nowhere to "go."
- Class system/stigma for homeless, who are equal citizens
- Lack of community advocates to see things through
- Lack of access to nutritious food
- The "Government" - Police harassment; can't build relationship with police in order to feel safe
- Not allowed to bring hot food to mitigation camp, which is difficult for people with mobility issues
- Lack of ADA showers
- Not enough capacity to do laundry for everyone
- Being around users when you're trying to recover from addiction
- Continuation of thefts, violence and even murder
- Lack of running water and restrooms

Continues on back

- Overflowing mitigation sites and lack of alternative safe sleeping options (2-3 month wait lists)
- Just moving people around, sweeps, no permanent solutions
- Using public funds for enforcement rather than solutions
- Barriers to self-improvement, employment due to lack of I.D
- Vulnerability Index scoring is hard if you don't have any "issues" – hence lack of service access
- No way to store food at camps - rats get into it, unsanitary
- Need a warm place in the morning (4:30 a.m.)
- Not enough access to mental health services and follow-up
- Faith-based doesn't work for everyone
- No place to park car overnight
- Not enough Narcan and Fentanyl test strips and clean needles
- Not much access to stimulating activities or enrichment
- Not separating single adults from families
- Need more youth shelters and places for kids and families
- Need more long-term storage lockers. Things keep getting thrown out
- Staff not getting paid enough to do a good job caring for people
- Uncertainty and lack of hope: never know if or how long you will have a bed
- Some people aren't comfortable living with other people or within four walls
- Need anger management classes and a support class to vent
- Create a special committee of people who have been homeless, low income, blue collar, middle class, to come up with true creative solutions. The solutions need to be real
- Don't allow CPS to take advantage of people who are homeless
- We need more places to go inside during the day and night
- Give people YWCA/YMCA memberships - decrease DT impact
- More ADA accessible apartments
- More storage
- Some people might be able to live month to month, but that would require a change in the landlord requirement to pay first, last and deposit all up-front
- Consider homeless banks based on Seattle model
- More bathrooms, showers, laundromats
- Consider making anything donated to homeless a tax write-off, including property
- When public insult and harass, it harms people who are homeless. More education and support
- Parking for people with vehicles to park, adding spots to existing lots, easily monitored. OR discounts for parking lots
- Make things available, don't force
- Need services on Saturday
- Need to address mental health and substance abuse
- Need stable place to stay in order to get help we need
- Need more case management
- Need services that take you out of DT environment into a healthier place
- Need to analyze cost/benefit per person
- Having felonies doesn't mean you are a bad person. We need more people to understand that
- Need alternatives to 12-step-self-empowering (not faith based)
- Increase access to public transportation
- Provide community garden space
- More shelters for teens/runaways to prevent homelessness
- Teach job skills and life skills - clean, take care of self
- Make community care center 24 hours
- Educate and reach out to community to share homes: bedroom for work exchange

Top Recommendations

- Treat all people with dignity, for a start
- Create adequate housing options for everyone
- Provide materials and teach people how to assemble their own tiny home
- Provide garden space and teach people how to grow their own food
- Create incentives and tax breaks for development of low-income housing
- Create a Work Center where people can sign-up for labor jobs based on their skills or after completing training
- Create or designate certain jobs for homeless based on existing talents and abilities: bike mechanic, artist, food handler, electronics, etc.
- Stay overnight in mitigation camp and/or unsanctioned site to understand what could be better
- Decriminalize homelessness - prevent victimization of homeless
- Provide self-cleaning bathrooms (see Paris model)
- Ensure more people are CPR- and Narcan-trained to help with emergencies
- Help homeless camps set-up self-governance structures and create leadership opportunities. Consider a "homeless court" to help settle grievances
- Provide access to recreation, education and entertainment. Consider an art studio and "starving arts" grant program
- Provide job counseling, resume training and help people see it through. Connect us with mentors
- Help people establish a permanent address so they can get documentation, pursue employment, register to vote
- Expand medical volunteer team to handle diabetics, Narcan users

Stay Connected



Stay Informed: Sign up for our e-news at olympiawa.gov/subscribe



Engage: Ask questions & share ideas at engageolympia.com



Contact Us: Email us at homelessness@ci.olympia.wa.us



Learn More: Visit our webpage at olympiawa.gov/homelessness

Evergreen Christian Community Listening Session

Olympia Homelessness Response Plan

June 30, 2019 High-Level Listening Sessions Summary



On June 30, 2019, the City of Olympia hosted a listening session at Evergreen Christian Community in Olympia. Approximately 80 community members participated in a conversation about homelessness and its impacts on our community, including what's currently working to address the crisis, and the next best steps that we can take as a community to respond. Below is a high level summary of what we heard:

- A diminishing sense of pride in Downtown and unwillingness to bring friends or family to Downtown destinations due to feeling unsafe, graffiti, loitering, the appearance of trash and loose needles, witnessed drug transactions, and panhandling
- The Downtown environment doesn't feel safe or welcoming for employees and residents
- Visible encampments throughout the City are unsightly, feel threatening, and reduce the pride and beauty of our town
- Feelings of frustration and uncomfortableness always being approached for money (all over the City)
- Concern about the amount of property damage and theft being experienced by property and business owners, and the impacts of homelessness on the vitality and growth of businesses
- Belief that crime is increasing, and desire to see less enabling of drug use and greater enforcement
- A desire to see laws enforced equally in regards to the homeless population and the housed population
- Frustration with seeing people ignore the law and break our community's social contract in regards to what behavior is unacceptable in public spaces
- Desire to balance compassion with consequences
- Support for the closure of the Artesian Well Park
- Individuals shared their involvement in non-profit and volunteer activities to support homeless individuals; examples included providing medical care, employment opportunities and training, meals, religious engagement, relationship-building, fundraising, and mentoring
- Personal experiences with residential break-ins and theft
- Evergreen Christian Community recognized as providing emergency services and support to those at immediate risk of falling into homelessness
- Recognition that homelessness is complex, and the individuals who make up the homeless population and communities have a diverse range of experiences and needs
- Concern and understanding expressed for people who are in this situation by no fault of their own; examples cited include individuals struggling with mental illness, disabilities, young age, aging out of the foster system, veterans, and people unable to afford housing
- A desire for safe, accessible downtown restrooms
- Feelings of sadness, helplessness, and hopelessness in the face of responding to this crisis; individuals wanting to know what to do to help
- Personal experiences that include struggles to make ends meet, teaching students who live in their cars, needing to rely on temporary housing, and having family members who are homeless
- The need for more mental health and substance abuse, and health care resources to provide services to all who need them
- The need for an easier way for individuals to navigate the system of available resources
- Questions about how to know or differentiate between individuals who need and want resources and support, and those who are making poor personal choices and/or don't want support
- Temporary housing should be temporary

Continues on back

What's currently working to address homelessness and its impacts, and what should be done next?

- Continue to grow and recognize the success of faith-based organizations and partnerships, which are providing much-needed emergency and transitional shelter options, volunteers, food, and supplies that are needed on a daily basis
- A stronger, more coordinated and a shared response is needed among government agencies; Olympia can't be alone in addressing the crisis
- Stronger coordination of providers (of resources), so that individuals can more easily access and receive the support they need
- Bring businesses to the table to help identify and implement solutions
- It doesn't feel as though anything is being done, and what is being done is either not working, or not working enough to make a visible impact.
- Addressing this issue is overwhelming, and there are not clear answers as to what's working
- More shelter and transitional housing options are needed to help serve segments of the homeless population that have difference needs
- Tiny homes seem to be working as a way to stabilize individuals and then connect them to services; examples cited include Plum Street Village and Quixote Village
- More community-wide dialogue is needed; continuing conversations among all members of our local and regional community to help identify how to address the crisis, but also develop an increased awareness about the root causes of homelessness
- Greater access to multiple funding streams, such as the recent addition of the Home Fund and businesses looking for opportunities to contribute
- Mitigation sites are working as a temporary, emergency shelter option, but also as a method to enable moving individuals out of illegal encampments in parks and open spaces
- The Downtown Ambassadors and Downtown Police Walking Patrol are a positive visible presence and are making valuable personal connections with individuals on the street
- Greater law enforcement is needed to hold people accountable to existing laws, including "zero tolerance" for drug activity, removing encampments where they are not allowed, and requiring that individuals move to mitigation sites or other temporary shelter options
- Start by addressing drug addiction and mental illness as primary causes of homelessness
- Stop enabling illegal and non-productive activities by homeless individuals; this coupled with the availability of services and resources is attracting an overwhelming number of individuals here
- Do not allow panhandling
- Identify and support only those who are willing to accept help and choose to better themselves
- Engage individuals experiencing homelessness to learn what they want or need; treat them with dignity, and recognize that each person has individual and unique experiences and needs
- Create pathways to success that include access to resources, mentoring, housing, and job training that leads to earning a living wage
- Allow kids leaving the foster system to choose to remain or return to care
- Create a task force that works just on addressing homelessness
- Continue to support the Homelessness Coordinator (Colin) and that knowledge that he brings from his experience in Tacoma to addressing this challenge
- Provide services for veterans; examples cited include Veteran's Court and housing specifically for veteran's
- The Community Care Center serves as a hub for individuals to readily learn about and access services, and also a safe and accepting place to socialize and connect with others
- Learn from other states, cities and communities what success looks like; focus on and adopt methods that are proven.
- Intervene early and provide needed services to youth
- Seek out and learn from those who have successfully navigated out of homelessness: what worked?
- Habitat for Humanity and Union Gospel Mission cited specifically as making a difference
- Connect individuals with entry-level jobs or jobs that help better the community, like picking up litter
- Relocate the mitigation site and CCC away from State street
- Look into banning the use of alcohol at the mitigation site
- Develop a clearinghouse or inventory of specific things individual community members can do to help contribute to addressing this crisis
- Establish a "homeless advocator"
- Continue and expand programs that help individuals make necessary human connections with case managers, and establish individualized goals and timelines, like the Familiar Faces Program [provided by the Olympia Police Department]

Transcribed Listening Sessions

Would you like to see all the input that was collected and transcribed from the listening session? Contact Stacey Ray at sray@ci.olympia.wa.us or 360.753.8046

Stay Connected



Stay Informed: Sign up for our e-news at olympiawa.gov/subscribe



Engage: Ask questions & share ideas at engageolympia.com



Contact Us: Email us at homelessness@ci.olympia.wa.us



Learn More: Visit our webpage at olympiawa.gov/homelessness