

# Ending Homelessness in King County



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## LWV of Seattle Positions on Housing, Teens and Women

### HOUSING

*Support programs to aid homeless families and single adults and to prevent homelessness. 1995, 2004.*

1. Ensure accessibility of services for homeless people by providing and publicizing a central clearinghouse for referral to such services.
2. Increase outreach and engagement programs that serve homeless individuals with mental illness, chemical addictions or dual diagnoses.
3. Provide resources and support services to prevent homelessness.

### TEENS

Support prevention and intervention programs to overcome problems of violence, suicide, homelessness, and family dysfunction. 1995.

- A. There should be increased public involvement and attention to teens and their needs, increased advertisement of teen programs to the teen population and to the public, and increased communication between all levels of the community and teenagers.
- B. There should be greater involvement of parents and teens in development and management of teen programs.
- C. There should be increased and continuing parenting skills training for parents.
- D. Criteria for support of public funding for teen programs should include:
  1. Promoting of equality of opportunity and diversity
  2. Serving a prevention and/or intervention purpose
  3. Evaluating for effectiveness
  4. Reflecting the needs of the neighborhood and/or specific special population
- E. There should be cooperation and collaboration between public and private agencies to provide services for teens. Government agencies should be encouraged to contract with private agencies to provide services for teens.

- F. Criteria for contracting with private agencies should include:
  1. Oversight and periodic evaluation by the appropriate government agency.
  2. Non-discrimination policies consistent with those required of government agencies.

- G. There should be stable funding for teen programs.

### WOMEN

Support local government policies that enable women to make economic and personal decisions for themselves and their families. 1981, 1993, 1994.

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- F. Ensure protection from domestic violence.
  1. Encourage the development of a legal definition for emotional abuse as part of the legal definition of domestic violence and make provision for legal remedies.
  2. Support public funding of programs to:
    - a. Reach out to victims of domestic violence
    - b. Provide protection and assistance
    - c. Assure access to the courts, and
    - d. For rehabilitation
  3. Advocate educational programs for all ages which identify domestic violence and teach rational methods for the resolution of disputes such as conflict resolution and anger management, for the prevention of violence.
  4. Support statewide, uniform data collection to define and communicate the issues and their scope and to document the need for funding.

Over the last decade, service providers, advocates, and government agencies have shifted the way in which they view homelessness. For a range of practical and humane reasons, the view is shifting from homelessness as an intractable problem to something we as cities, as counties, as states, and as a nation, can end – and can end within ten years.

In 2005, civic leaders in King County adopted plan: *A Roof Over every Bed in King County: Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness*. The following is an overview of homelessness in King County, a summary of national and local strategies for ending homelessness, a synopsis of King County's Plan to End Homelessness, and a discussion of some of the challenges and opportunities we face.

## **HOMELESSNESS: AN OVERVIEW**

### **Homelessness in King County**

The term “homelessness” is defined broadly to include people who are “chronically” homeless, as well as people who are “temporarily” homeless. The federal definition of homelessness, used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, includes persons living on the streets, including in abandoned buildings, and people staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, hotels paid by service agency vouchers, in cars, in a place not meant for human habitation, or in rooms not meant for sleeping.

Each year, the Seattle King County Coalition for the Homeless conducts a “One Night Count” to try to quantify the number of people living on the street in Seattle, Shoreline, Kent, White Center, and East King County, and living in shelters and transitional programs in King County.

### **Factors Contributing to Homelessness**

There are numerous factors that contribute to homelessness, including poverty, the lack of affordable housing, the cost of health care, unemployment and low-paying jobs, the lack of needed treatment and/or support services for people affected by substance abuse and mental illness, domestic violence, and re-entry into the community after prison release.

In the last half-century, several key events have con-

tributed to homelessness in America, including:

- 1) the loss of cheap, private sector housing
- 2) the loss of federally subsidized housing; and
- 3) the de-institutionalization of people affected by mental illness.

The reduction in available affordable housing like “SROs” (single room occupancy) and the increase in real estate prices contributed to the number of people who are homeless. For example, between 1980 and 1990, 8,000 cheap, downtown Seattle hotel units and apartments were demolished to make room for office towers.

While the federal government has subsidized low-income housing since the 1930s, the demand greatly exceeds the supply. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the federal government produced a significant number of units of low-income housing, which is now deteriorating. The high cost of constructing new housing has since limited the addition of needed new housing stock. Nationally, only about one-third of households in need receive a housing subsidy from federal, state, or local government. A family's average time on a waiting list for federally-subsidized housing is 28 months.

The de-institutionalization of state psychiatric hospital patients in the 1960s and 1970s led to a drastic increase in the number of mentally ill persons who are homeless. The trend towards shorter psychiatric commitments continues to this day. It is estimated that between 30%–40% of single homeless adults suffer from mental illness.

### **The 2006 “One Night Count”**

According to the One Night Count, there are over 7,900 people who are homeless in King County on any given night, and countless more over the course of a year.<sup>1</sup> Of that number, 1,946 live outside without shelter, 2,463 are served by emergency shelters, and 3,501 are in transitional housing programs.

Unsheltered people included in the One Night Count were found in vehicles (33%), walking with no destination (16%), under roads or bridges (13%), in doorways (9%), and the remainder were found on benches, in parking garages, in city parks, in bushes or undergrowth, at bus stops, in alleys, or in other structures.

1 Note that the “One Night Count” is a single sampling event that provides a snapshot at a point in time (January of each year).

Of the total number of people who are homeless accessing emergency shelters and transitional housing, the One Night Count found the following breakdown among households:

36%	Single adult men
14%	Single adult women
49%	Families or couples with children
1%	Youth

Of the 5,964 people who are homeless accessing emergency shelters or transitional housing, 29% were children. Immigrants and refugees were found among all categories of people who are homeless, but the majority (90%) were in families with children.

With the exception of Asian Pacific Islanders, people of color are disproportionately over-represented in King County’s homeless population. Although people of color make up about 26% of the population in King County, they represent at least 58% of people who are homeless in King County. Specifically, the race/ethnicity of individuals served in comparison to the general population in King County (based on data from the 2000 U.S. Census) shows the following:

	General Population	Homeless Population
<b>Caucasian</b>	75.5%	37%
<b>African American/Black</b>	5.4%	34%
<b>Native American</b>	.9%	4%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	11.3%	4%
<b>Hispanic</b>	5.5%	10%
<b>Multi-racial</b>	4.1%	6%
<b>Unknown</b>	---	5%

Nearly 85% of emergency shelter and transitional programs in King County are located in Seattle. At the same time, only 53% of people who are homeless reported that Seattle was their last permanent address.

The most frequently cited disabilities among people who are homeless are chemical dependency and

mental illness. In addition, 946 people reported that they had experienced violence or abuse in the past year, and finally, 149 self-reported that they had AIDS or were HIV-positive.

**How Has It Changed In Recent Years?**

Between 1998–2004, there were quantifiable increases in the number of unsheltered people in King County. In the past two years, the One Night Count has shown slight decreases in the number of people who are homeless. The fluctuation in numbers, however, must be viewed in context, because the One Night Count can be affected by weather, economic conditions, and shelter options on any given night.

**ENDING HOMELESSNESS**

**Efforts to End Homelessness Nationally**

Many people and organizations are active in efforts to end homelessness throughout the country, with key organizations such as the National Alliance to End Homelessness and the National Coalition for the Homeless providing leadership. In addition, several cities, including San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Portland, are touted as models for “Best Practices” in ending homelessness.

**National Alliance to End Homelessness**

The Alliance is a nonpartisan organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. The Alliance analyzes policy, develops policy solutions, and provides data and research to policymakers and elected officials to inform policy debates and educate the public.

The Alliance has called America’s communities to action. It put together a Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness with the following ten essentials:

- 1) Plan
- 2) Data
- 3) Emergency Prevention
- 4) Systems Prevention
- 5) Outreach
- 6) Shorten Homelessness
- 7) Rapid Re-Housing
- 8) Services
- 9) Permanent Housing; and
- 10) Income.

Many of these ten essentials have been incorporated into the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County.

### **San Francisco**

Every year 600,000 families with 1.35 million children experience homelessness in the United States, making up about 50 percent of the homeless population over the course of the year. In San Francisco 2,700 persons are members of homeless families representing nearly 40 percent of the homeless population. San Francisco has implemented a “Housing First” model<sup>2</sup> for families.

The Housing First model includes an assessment team that steps in when they are contacted by a family or social worker. The team conducts a site visit to decide what needs to be done to keep the family stable and prevent homelessness. San Francisco is restructuring eviction prevention programs to be more flexible. Eviction prevention programs will include move-in assistance and ongoing rental subsidies beyond the initial eviction prevention payment.

San Francisco plans to cut back on the number of emergency shelters so that the emergency shelter system is only available to families as a last resort or dire emergency, like fleeing domestic violence. The Housing First model makes a distinction between transitional and permanent housing. Transitional housing is services-enriched for families that need longer-term intervention. Permanent housing is focused on affordability and access instead of services.

### **Philadelphia**

In the late 1990s, Philadelphia put in place a tough law to get homeless people off the street by limiting access to emergency shelters. The approach has since been changed because of the response from community advocates.

The network of programs and services developed to encourage people to move from the streets into housing included low demand residences, extensive outreach, entry-level safe havens, emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and permanent supportive housing programs. Supportive housing services including outreach,

mental health and substance abuse treatment, primary health care, and intensive case management are delivered directly by city agencies.

Philadelphia is acclaimed for its data-gathering system to keep track of shelter use through the city’s existing information technology. The data collected is used to allocate resources, look at outcomes for homeless persons, and identify trends in the demographics of the city’s homeless population.

Philadelphia’s Housing Support Center is the gateway for services. It coordinates housing and service resources from different social service agencies, thereby giving homeless people a centralized place to find resources. Also key to Philadelphia’s success is the coordination of efforts among city departments and service providers.

### **Portland**

Portland’s ten-year plan, unveiled in 2004, is based on three principles: (1) focus on the most chronically homeless population; (2) streamline access to existing services for prevention; and (3) target resources to programs that offer measurable results.

Portland’s plan “Home Again, a 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness” also uses a “Housing First” approach that reduces the time a person or family spends in a shelter, and helps get them into permanent housing. The permanent housing is supportive housing that includes access to social and health services.

The community’s latest Street Count shows a 39% decrease in the number of unsheltered homeless and a “70% reduction in the number of chronically homeless people who were living outdoors two years ago.”

Portland’s report also notes that 717 families have been housed, exceeding the 2 year goal of 500; 480 permanent supportive housing units have been opened compared to the 2 year goal of 260 units; and 1,039 chronically homeless individuals have been housed, exceeding the two year goal of 565 by 184%.

2 “Housing First” is an approach that gets homeless people into housing – first – and provides supportive services in conjunction with housing. Through the “housing first” model, services can be provided through more centralized access points.



## **EFFORTS TO END HOMELESSNESS LOCALLY**

### **Washington State Policy Response**

In April 2005, the Washington Legislature passed the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act, HB 2163 (codified at RCW 43.185C). The goal of the Act is to reduce homelessness in Washington by 50 percent in ten years. Under the Act, the State of Washington requires county governments to adopt local ten-year homeless plans and an annual point-in-time count of people who are homeless. To date, 36 counties have established plans. The Act also requires the development of a statewide plan to end homelessness with a focus on statewide goals and performance measurement. The state's responsibilities will be implemented by members of the Governor-appointed Interagency Council on Homelessness, comprised of representatives from all relevant state agencies.

The Act provides an estimated \$12 million annually for housing and services for people who are homeless in Washington. Funding comes from a \$10 surcharge on documents recorded by county auditors, like the recording of deeds. Funds at the county and city levels are to be used for programs that help achieve ten-year plan goals, such as shelter expansion, homeless supportive services, eviction prevention programs, and supportive and transitional housing.

### **City of Seattle**

Seattle is viewed as a national model for coalition-building efforts among diverse housing constituencies. The Seattle-King County Coalition for the Homeless and the local City-County partnership are well-regarded nationally. Seattle's history of funding through housing levies for housing development, and the operation and maintenance of low-income housing, is also notable.

### **Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County**

In 2004, the Committee to End Homelessness in King County developed their ten-year plan: *A Roof Over every Bed in King County: Our Community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness*. The Committee is responsible for implementing the Plan. The

Committee includes representatives from local government, businesses, faith-based communities, service providers, civic leaders, and people who are or have been homeless.

### **Principal actions and Timeline**

The Ten-Year Plan identifies six principal actions to end homelessness. Each action is supported by specific steps to be taken during each phase of the Plan.

1. Prevent Homelessness
2. Coordinate Leadership and Initiatives to End Homelessness Countywide
3. Build and Sustain the Political Will and Community Support to End Homelessness
4. Secure 9,500 Units of Housing for Homeless Persons.
5. Deliver Flexible Culturally Competent<sup>3</sup> Services to Support Stability and Independence
6. Measure Success and Reporting Outcomes

The King County Plan has four phases

#### **Year 1**

During the first phase (2005), priority actions included creating the governing structure to implement and monitor the plan, improving data collection methods, and educating the public about the causes, costs, and impacts of homelessness.

#### **Years 2 – 5**

The second phase (2006 – 2010) will focus on developing affordable and supportive housing for people who are homeless, increasing access to services, and addressing the disproportionately high number of people of color who are homeless.

#### **Years 6 – 9**

During the third phase (2011 – 2013), public institutions will have programs in place to help make sure people leaving the system (like jails, hospitals, and foster care) have appropriate housing.

#### **Year 10**

In the final phase (2014) the focus will be on fine-tuning the system and preventing future homelessness.

3 “Cultural competency” is defined as “a set of behaviors, attributes, and policies enabling an agency or individual to work effectively in cross cultural situations.”

<b>Governance Structure of Committee to End Homelessness</b>		
The governance structure of the Committee to End Homelessness includes three groups with separate roles and responsibilities. In addition, there are five working committees to help develop implementation strategies and guide the work of the Committee. The working committees focus on target population groups (single adults, families, and youth), communications, and resource development and alignment.		
<b>Governing Board</b>	<b>Interagency Council</b>	<b>Consumer Advisory Council</b>
Provides high-level oversight and policy development and also guides planning, coordinates current funding and works to create additional resources to sustain the vision and leadership of the Ten-Year Plan.  <i>Quarterly meetings</i>	Coordinates collaboration between partners and systems involved in providing housing and homelessness services, develops new models for service delivery, and recommends policy direction to the Governing Board.  <i>Monthly meetings</i>	Works as a team to assess the needs and concerns of homeless individuals and families. Conveys information from the consumer (homeless) perspective to the Governing Board and Interagency Council to guide decision-making.  <i>Monthly meetings</i>

The first year of the Ten-Year Plan was designated as a planning year, and to date, several actions have been taken. A leadership structure is in place, which includes a Governing Board, an Interagency Council, and a Consumer Advisory Board.

The organizational chart above summarizes the governance structure.

In addition, the Ten-Year Plan has been endorsed by the King County Council, the city councils of ten cities in the County, and many faith-based communities. Finally, a data collection system called the Safe Harbors information system was implemented to improve the quality and consistency of data on services and programs that are helping homeless people.

### **Key Strategies**

The Ten-Year Plan is built upon key strategies, including preventing homelessness, implementing a “housing first” approach through supportive housing options, and strengthening system strategies and the community’s commitment to ending homelessness.

### **Service Access Points**

Currently, homeless people in need of supportive services often must go to several different places to gain access to resources. The Ten-Year Plan calls for community-based access points in each sub-region of King

<b>Supportive Housing</b>	
<b>What is Supportive Housing?</b>  Supportive housing is housing with on-site services ranging from moderate to intensive-level services. The goal of supportive housing is to make sure that homeless persons get “housing first” and, simultaneously, have access to the services they might need. Services range from support in reaching financial independence and housing stability to mental health, chemical dependence, and medical services.	<b>Characteristics of Supportive Housing:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Easy to access</i></li> <li>• <i>Client involvement</i></li> <li>• <i>Culturally accessible and competent</i></li> <li>• <i>Relevant to needs of clients and flexible enough to meet those needs as they change</i></li> <li>• <i>Affordable</i></li> </ul>

County to provide “one-stop shopping” for many resources, including emergency needs, medical needs, and immediate intervention if needed, assessment and development of a survival plan, referral to housing placement, and benefits counseling and assistance.

### ***Housing Models***

Over the next ten years, the Plan anticipates that 9,500 total housing units will be needed to support the County’s homeless population. The Plan expects that of those 9,500 units, 2,500 will be for chronic homeless persons, 4,800 for other single homeless adults, 1,900 for families, and 300 for youth.

The types of housing models follow a continuum based on the services that homeless persons are expected to need. Housing types include: subsidized independent apartments, units with moderate supportive services, and units with intensive supportive services.

### ***Affordable Housing***

About 50,000 King County households receive housing subsidies each year from the Seattle, King County, and Renton housing authorities. About 13,500 households receive Section 8 housing certificates that allow households to find rental housing closer to schools, work, or other community supportive services. There are about 10,000 families on the waiting list to receive Section 8 certificates.

Housing is considered affordable when it costs 30% of income. The average rent, plus utilities, for a 2-bedroom apartment in King County is \$996. A household would have to earn \$19.17 per hour to afford this housing.

### ***Specific Strategies for Subpopulations***

The Ten-Year Plan recognizes that specific subpopulations – single adults, families, and youth – may have different barriers to housing access. In response, the Plan identifies strategies targeted to meet the needs of those subpopulations.

The Ten-Year Plan includes two key strategies for meeting housing needs. The first is maximizing existing housing and support service systems, determining the gaps, and figuring out how to fill those gaps. The second is ensuring that there are adequate resources to meet the need for thousands more units of accessible, rent-subsidized permanent housing.

For single adults, it is estimated that about 2,900 are in need of intensive on-site supportive services. Most supportive housing programs prohibit residents from using drugs or alcohol, particularly on-site. One example of a different approach is the 1811 Eastlake Project.

The situation for families differs slightly, but yields similar results. The majority of homeless families have very low incomes. This further limits the affordable housing for families with incomes below \$1,800 per month, or 30% of the median for a family of four.

To meet the needs of homeless families, the Plan calls for developing more affordable housing that will be accessible to low-income families through regular, long-term housing subsidies. Housing subsidies are expected to be a means of increasing housing stability for homeless families over a period of time. It is estimated that 60 percent of families will need housing subsidies for 5 years or more.

Homeless children face particular difficulties due to housing instability, resulting in mental and physical health concerns and academic delay. Research shows that homeless children are often behind in their immunizations, and suffer from a range of undiagnosed and untreated health problems.

Finally, issues that are faced by youth (up to age 24), and strategies for addressing their issues, are different from those of single adults who are homeless, or homeless children and within families. The Plan provides strategies for prevention of homelessness, including partnering with the foster care system, providing information to schools and community centers to raise awareness of youth who may be at risk, focusing on family preservation and reconciliation services that are culturally competent, and coordinating with the systems encountered by youth (mental health and chemical dependency treatment, juvenile detention, and jails) to ensure housing plans are in place before re-entry into the community.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

### ***Funding for Services***

At this time, King County is at least 4,600 units short of its goal to provide housing for the anticipated 9,500 homeless persons in need within the next 10 years.

Without adequate funding, however, plans cannot be implemented and may not resolve the issues we set about to address. There is a concern about the adequacy of funding to provide the comprehensive services



needed *with* the housing first model. It is critical that emergency shelter not be abandoned at the expense of providing long-term or permanent housing.

Economic stressors, including the increased cost of housing, healthcare, and childcare, and comparatively lower wage increases over time, add to concerns about being able to appropriately gauge and address the needs of King County's current and future homeless populations. Economic stressors take a toll on the ability of individuals and families to maintain stability, and lead to cycles in which housing is not consistently stable.

Addressing poverty is an overarching issue when attempting to address housing issues for homeless persons. It is important to note that in many respects, expenses are just as important as income in reducing poverty. Policy considerations need not only look at how to increase income for individuals and families in poverty, but also at how to reduce expenses. Housing subsidies are one model of reducing expenses.

Finally, the most robust funding sources for ending homelessness, such as Section 8 subsidies, remain at the federal level.

### Consumer Involvement

The Ten-Year Plan has involved homeless persons (consumers) in the development and implementation of the Plan through a Consumer Advisory Council. In addition to consumer involvement in the Plan's governance, however, consumers can play a role in ensuring that programs are successful through peer counseling and mentoring.

### Tracking and Privacy

The Safe Harbors system is a data-collection and storage system that tracks information on homeless persons (in the aggregate) that access services from agencies and service providers. Individuals are not personally tracked or allowed or denied services based on the Safe Harbors system.

The goal of the Safe Harbors system is to better understand the point of entry and level of services provided to people who are homeless, and determine what works and what doesn't.

The Safe Harbors system has raised concerns related to the right to privacy about the type and use of data collected about people who are homeless. At

## First Place

"Hope, home, and education for every child, one family at a time." [www.firstplaceschool.org](http://www.firstplaceschool.org)



First Place is model service agency based in Seattle, Washington. First Place is devoted to educating and nurturing children whose families struggle with the risk or reality of homelessness. First Place offers housing, culturally relevant education, and support services to help families become permanently stable.

First Place recognizes the special needs of families in transition, and offers services to children and their families for free. Services include:

- Quality Education in a safe, small classroom setting for children in grades K-5, including assessment and evaluation.
- Counseling, Case Management, and Social Services to help children and their families achieve stability.
- Basic Services like a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snack; clothing; school supplies; transportation; and health screenings and referrals.
- Services to facilitate student placement and transition into the most appropriate school setting.

First Place recognizes that the poor, homeless, and families in severe crisis often lack the skills needed to obtain and maintain permanent housing. In response, First Place also offers family support services. The goal is to break the cycle of poverty by creating an environment for families that inspires them to obtain, sustain, and maintain permanent housing, as well as achieve educational and career goals to bring stability to their lives.

## 1811 Eastlake Project

The 1811 Eastlake Project, owned and operated by Seattle's Downtown Emergency Service Center, is a supportive housing project for homeless men and women. Residents of the Project suffer from alcohol addiction and chronic homelessness, and have been the highest users of publicly funded crisis systems, especially hospital emergency rooms, sobering and detoxification facilities, and jails. The goal of the Project is to improve the lives of its residents through reduced alcohol consumption, increased stability, and better health care.

Residents are not prohibited from using alcohol in their residences. Residents receive, however, the following supportive services on a 24-hour basis:

- Mental health and chemical dependency treatment
- On-site health care, including medication monitoring
- Daily meals and outings to food banks
- Case management services
- Weekly community-building activities

A comprehensive study of this Project's effect on our local homeless system is being funded through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The research is being conducted in collaboration with the University of Washington School of Social Work and will produce important outcome data.

this time, Safe Harbors collects at a minimum, an individual's date of birth, initials, and gender. Data is only collected with the individual's consent, and only aggregate measures are created from the data. At this time, domestic violence service providers are not required to collect information to include in the Safe Harbors system.

### **Disproportionality and Culturally Competent Services**

Service providers and local advocates are beginning to address the need for culturally competent services in response to the reality that a disproportionate number of people who are homeless are people of color. A recent forum on institutional racism sponsored by the Seattle/King County Coalition for the Homeless was moved to larger venue and still could not accommodate the registration of all those interested in attending. Recommendations from the forum will be brought to the coalition's general meeting for incorporation into their work program.

### **Victims of Domestic Violence**

The 2006 One Night Count found 946 people accessing shelter and transitional housing programs who had experienced violence or abuse within the past year. Of those, 75% were accessing family programs.

Victims of domestic violence are often marginalized and face particular barriers when they become homeless or are seeking housing. At this time, there are not enough emergency shelter beds to accommodate victims of domestic violence in King County. For every available bed, it is estimated that 15 victims are turned away.

### **Re-Entry after Jail**

Inmates released from jail are frequently among the homeless population. A survey of Work Education Release found that 23 of 52 individuals had been homeless in the past year, and that only 2 of the 52 had a housing situation that would be stable for at least six months. Similarly, a survey of the Community Corrections Alternatives Program found that 6 of 14 individuals had been homeless in the past year, and that only 2 of 14 had a housing situation that would be stable for at least six months.

### **Political Will**

The countywide makeup of the committee to end homelessness is a necessary first step in moving away from a "Not In My Backyard" or "it's not my problem" approach to dealing with homelessness. Mary Alyce Burleigh, Councilmember, City of Kirkland, an active and outspoken advocate for the ten-year plan, states, "We on the Eastside know that homelessness has no boundaries, and we know that it is mandatory that we all participate in finding a regional solution to the issue."

When asked what it will take to end homelessness, many grassroots leaders cite the need for "political will." Generally, this refers to the political will of the people, the taxpayers who fund our social safety net, the voters, and the general public. To effect and sustain the changes necessary, we will have to go beyond the membership of the Ten-Year Plan committees. We are challenged to find a range of solutions for the myriad of problems, from housing, to health care, to livable wages and incomes that can sustain us all.

### **SHARE/WHEEL Tent City Project**

The SHARE/WHEEL Tent City Project is an example of a consumer-based project to provide homeless people with emergency shelter. Tent City is a network of homeless people living in temporary camps in King County. Tent City consists not only of the tents that residents live in, but camp resources like Porta-Potties and hand washing stations. Tent City applies for permits before locating in communities.

There are standard rules that apply at Tent City. Everyone participates in the governance and maintenance of the camp, and everyone is responsible for the operation of the camp. Each resident has to attend at least one organizational meeting a week and do at least one maintenance chore a day. There is a zero tolerance policy for drugs, alcohol, weapons, violence, and physical or verbal abusive behavior.

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**APPENDIX**

Letter of support for the 10 year plan (based on state and/or national positions, signed by Leagues of Greater Seattle and South King.

April 26, 2006

Bill Block, Project Director  
The Committee to End Homelessness in King County  
821 Second Ave. Suite 600  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Block,

The League of Women Voters believes that those who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate or for whom jobs are not available should be assured of public assistance and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and access to health care. The League supports specific programs to aid homeless families and single adults to prevent homelessness. We also believe that all levels of government and the private sector share the responsibility to help alleviate the housing shortage for low income people.

To that end, The Leagues of Women Voters of King County support the goals and direction of the county-wide plan to end homelessness in 10 years as envisioned in [A Roof Over Every Bed in King County: Our Communities Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness](#). The plan embodies a respect for the dignity of each person. Those in need of assistance are given housing first and then adequate support services. The League is firmly committed to the goals of prevention and early intervention which should lead to no person being homeless.

The Leagues of Women Voters of King County will monitor the implementation of the plan over the next nine years. We will focus on key factors such as adequate funding for housing and support services, the evaluation and effectiveness of measures being implemented, and whether cultural relevancy, privacy and consumer involvement are included in all aspects of the plan.

As an organization committed to active participation of citizens in government, we would like to participate in community education and outreach to increase the political will and support for this plan. We believe that this plan will provide a dignified alternative to our current system and will bring permanence and stability to all our residents.

Sincerely,

Nancy Eitreim, President  
The League of Women Voters of Seattle

Becky Cox, President  
The League of Women Voters of King County South