



SPOKANE WASHINGTON

Homelessness Plan 2.0

A plan to fundamentally shift how people transition out of homelessness through prevention and compassionate accountability



Current state of homelessness

Reviewing conversations, proposals, research, and other documentation demonstrates passion and desire to humanely and compassionately connect people to existing resources and enhance them with new options to better meet the need. It also reveals a community at a tipping point and willingness to partner in a results-oriented relationship.



1. **A 'big and growing' challenge:** *Half cite sadness*
2. **A statewide issue** and government should be responsible: *Two-thirds organically say government responsible; 92% say state government priority*
3. **Directly address underlying causes:** *Improve and expand access to healthcare, mental health services, and substance abuse followed by job training and education*



1. 86% say it is **the top challenge** (26%) or a **big challenge** (60%), which is slightly ahead of state's 83% (29% top challenge, 54% big challenge)
2. 56% say homelessness is **a statewide problem** and state lawmakers should address (62% state)
3. 30% say crisis is **in specific communities** and local officials should be responsible (28% state)
4. 23% of **homeless in families** with children

Sources: Chronic Homelessness: A Crossroad, Challenge Seattle; Regional 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan Annual Report; Downtown Spokane Partnership Proposes Policies to Improve Public Safety; A Report on Listening Sessions and Interviews with Key Stakeholders and Partners; 2021 Community Needs Assessment; Mayor's Office constituent communication

Prioritize. Collaborate. Deliver Results.



Vision statement

A regional framework of community expectations for behavior that builds from successes with youth, families, and veterans and prioritizes civility, prevention, efficient use of taxpayer resources, collaboration, outcomes, and universal accountability for behavior of the individuals, neighborhoods, and entities of a vibrant, clean, and safe community in a way that respects and values everyone.



Opportunity statement

There is a universally shared belief that sidewalks, alleyways, and other outdoor areas are not safe, healthy, or humane for those struggling with mental health, substance abuse, or other conditions that require emergency interventions and a permanent housing solution to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring by fostering shared responsibility among stakeholders.

“Government entities are very capable, working hard and making progress in some areas, but, as in other cities, it is perceived that politics can and has gotten in the way of progress at times. Even though there are differing thought processes and approaches by different elected officials, it would be good if politics could be set aside more often to find some consensus and compromise on the critical issue of homelessness.”

Berry Consulting, Inc.

“This is not a partisan issue. It’s not a political issue. It’s a human issue.”

*Christine Gregoire
Challenge Seattle
Former Governor*

“Homelessness has been over-politicized in Spokane to the detriment of potential solutions.”

Hello for Good

“In light of the legal context for encampments in our region, there has been an increased emphasis on creating emergency shelter and focus on how that component of the system is addressing the community need. This has led to an emphasis on the funding of emergency shelter at previously unprecedented levels.”

Spokane City/County Continuum of Care

“Spokane has as seemingly impossible problem of accommodating ‘homeless’ people... There is a strong kickback, characterized by the term ‘NIMBY’ (Not in my Backyard) from citizens living near any known empty buildings.”

*A Plan for a “Homeless”
Facility for Spokane*

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Guiding principles

- Encourage partnerships and focus on the benefits of collaboration while recognizing that the approach can take longer to achieve the desired outcome.
- Resist the urge to personally attack staff members in the media and other public communication to avoid unintended impacts to morale (Berry Consulting, Inc.)
- Listen. To the community. To experts. To conveners. To advocates. To businesses. To lived experiences. To the data.
- Acknowledge and celebrate progress knowing that it is an outcome the community can continue to build from.
- Don't dismiss good in search of perfect.

"We understand that if we call come together through collaborations and partnerships, we all gain greater strengths to address the concern and challenges within our community. Furthermore, if we identify the resources that are currently in existence, and we call those resources 'assets,' we can turn the conversation around to seeking not 'What's wrong?', not 'What are the problems?', not 'What are the needs?', but 'What are the problem-solving resources in a neighborhood – those are assets.'"

*2021 Community Needs
Assessment
SNAP*

The DRAFT Plan 2.0



Emergency Sheltering

- Provide adequate emergency shelter
- Find, develop, and utilize an all-purpose shelter that addresses the needs of warming, cooling, and clean air for the most vulnerable
- Improve, where needed, City contracts for housing and service providers to become more performance based and outcome driven
- Provide avenues to fast track the needs of the higher-functioning individuals on a path to self-sufficiency
- Improve the coordinated entry system
- Focus all emergency housing models on housing outcomes
- House individuals during treatment and help them navigate to housing while in treatment
- Implement a "no walk in/off" policy that prevents loitering problems in the neighborhood
- Grow regional resources as a system of dispersed, smaller, service-specific sites
- Ensure supporting services are appropriately matched to housing first options and educate those accessing services and the community about the existing resources

Individualized Services

- Provide adequate access to emergency and social services for all individuals in need by equitably distributing services across the county
- The provision of "Housing First" low and no barrier housing should be succeeded by a dramatic expansion of treatment programs for individuals who suffer from mental illness and substance abuse disorder
- Reinforce a strategy of separating the populations of those experiencing homelessness and partner with the right organization best suited to meet their needs. Customize solutions for the distinct populations
- With providers, expand number of beds and resources for mental health, addictions, and co-occurring disorders; advocate for more funding and legislative support. Address funding, staffing, and training issues
- Expand the number of beds and resources for mental health, addictions and co-occurring disorders and advocate for more funding and legislative support
- Expand number of long-term senior care beds (about 200) and resources for those without a traditional housing path; advocate for funding and legislative support

Supportive Resources

- Expand the ability to intervene in the lives of people who are struggling with mental illness and addiction, and provide housing and support that is appropriate to their circumstances
- Enhance the Coordinated Entry System, which currently over-emphasizes the most critical needs, to get individuals help before they find themselves in a critical situation and increase transparency across providers
- Establish an intake center to help meet the needs of the community with triage and system navigation services
- Expand and train Diversion as an emerging best practice for case managers, providers, or those helping with system navigation that occurs BEFORE coordinated entry to fast track individuals ready for specific housing options
- Expand weekly shelter provider call to be focused on solving specific client or system issues with resources and authority to make changes or improvements. A command center approach encapsulates as much decision making power in that structure as possible

Name and Need

- Address the constraints of our CMIS/HMIS system to have solid real-time data for the needs of our shelters, providers, City, and law enforcement
- Overhaul the HMIS/CMIS systems so that accurate data and performance measures better ensure that efforts are achieving the desired results
- Use outreach and coordination between every single system that encounters people experiencing homelessness to quickly identify and engage people experiencing homelessness into services that result in a housing solution
- Work with shelter and service providers, street outreach teams, and other partners to build a relationship of trust with individuals to identify individuals and their needs. Decrease the ability to remain anonymous as a recipient of services while maintaining some level of privacy

Case Worker

- Review effectiveness of City-funded outreach program
- Develop and build more outreach teams for those experiencing homelessness
- Offer training to establish clear expectations and alignment to outreach program requirements
- Develop case management framework to build a set of universal set of expectations among providers to move individuals through the regional homelessness system of resources
- Identify and implement staff trainings such as diversion, progressive engagement, motivational interviewing, and trauma-informed care
- Improve Case Conferencing mechanisms to effectively meet the need of the most vulnerable

Transparency and Accountability

- Bring CoC, CHHS, and City Council together
- Establish cadence of regular meetings with housing and service providers on needs and metrics; public the performance data and plans for improving outcomes, including where the private
- Improve data sharing and focus resources on measurable outcomes
- Establish a strong public messaging plan of data, direction, and accomplishment
- Pass control of grant dollars to designated non-profits to manage through an RFP process to depoliticize decisions and put critical decisions in the hands of career professionals in this very specialized area of expertise
- Gain local data and research that demonstrates cost-savings and effectiveness of focuses reduction in chronic homelessness and number of unsheltered people
- Educate the community regularly on importance of these initiatives
- Provide additional paid support staff to the Continuum of Care to assist with the work of implementing the 5-Year Plan

Housing

- Meet the demand for workforce housing by reducing regulations on an overly regulated housing market
- Ensure a system-wide approach to housing within our region, including Growth Management Act issues, and the creation of City and legislative actions that reduce the onerous barriers to both existing and new housing
- Develop private landlord partnerships that offer scattered housing throughout the county with commitments from local landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers coupled with incentives to landlords to help close the market rate gap
- Explore possibilities for strategic use of HOME Homeless Assistance Program dollars to convert existing motels into apartment units in which clients can "transition in place" as case management support enables them to access lasting income through access to employment or disability
- Develop, educate and incentivize more affordable housing developers to increase the overall building capacity of the region to relieve labor and supply shortages

Compassionate Accountability

- Interpret and apply the Martin v. City of Boise decision to enforce laws currently on the books, which are already compliant with its requirements
- Support community efforts to tackle the fentanyl and opioid epidemics that is a significant contributor to housing destabilization
- Enforce effective policies around homelessness, such as camping, sit-lie, drug-free zones, and other high-impact ordinances
- Create policy that supports the plan for compassionate accountability
- Reestablish the basis for proactive/neighborhood policing by returning to the 'reasonable suspicion' evidentiary standard and amending other legislative actions that have dramatically reduced the efficacy of neighborhood policing in Washington
- Amend drug legalization by restoring common sense restrictions on readily accessible, highly addictive drugs
- As COVID-19 becomes endemic, the private and public sectors should prepare and coordinate the return of employees and visitors that bring vibrancy and a sense of safety to our streets
- Evaluate the next evolution of Community Court for connectivity to services and responsibility for action

Prioritize. Collaborate. Deliver Results.



Overarching strategy

Work collaboratively to build trust among regional partners, grow from areas of strength, and scale the solution based on successes to make best use of available resources.

- Get individuals emergency housed as a transition strategy
- Meet people with individualizes services
- Coordinate supportive resources
- Know them by name and need
- Deploy case workers to meet people where they are physically and in life
- Deliver transparency and accountability to establish and maintain buy-in
- Create more housing inventory
- Expect compassionate accountability by demonstrating respect and that behavior matters

“The greater Spokane community made solid strides in helping to make the experience of homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring... We made progress toward reducing homelessness, particularly among certain portions of the population experiencing homelessness. Our community’s “Functional Zero” approach is making a huge difference. And, additional investment in new sheltering and bridge housing approaches will build on those successes into the next fiscal year and beyond.”

*Spokane Regional Continuum of Care “Regional 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan Annual Report”
November 2021*

Source: Chronic Homelessness: A Crossroad, Challenge Seattle; 5-Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness; Downtown Spokane Partnership Proposes Policies to Improve Public Safety; A Report on Listening Sessions and Interviews with Key Stakeholders and Partners; Mayor’s Office constituent communication

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Here's where we go next

1. **Identify a dependable shelter site for on-demand activation during emergent weather, disaster, and other needs**
2. Establish a plan for any tenant improvements that include potential for accommodating multiple populations before activating on-demand site
3. **Seek proposals from operators of the on-demand location and encourage partnerships to accommodate multiple populations**
4. Coordinate with partners identified in the emergency activation plan
5. **Develop transportation partnership and route for services connectivity**
6. Establish behavioral health resource connection to on-demand location
7. **Identify new permanent low-barrier shelter site to add space and better distribute services**
8. **Deploy public shelter dashboard for awareness of resources and capacity**
9. Identify and establish sustainable funding sources from public and private partnerships
10. **Launch a community fundraising effort to sustain operation of the regional system**
11. Raise awareness of need for additional volunteers
12. Evaluate potential navigators options
13. Structure contracts to include expectation statements and deliver outcomes
14. Open a dialogue with the court system about how to enhance therapeutic court options for greater accountability
15. Identify City responsibilities and those of the partners



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Resources that informed the plan

Plans

- Challenge Seattle
- City's 5-year Plan
- Continuum of Care 5-year Plan
- 2021 Community Needs Assessment
- Mayor Woodward's July 2020 Homelessness Plan
- A Plan for "Homeless" Facility for Spokane
- A Professional Study on Homelessness

Community partners and consultants

- Berry Consulting Group
- Downtown Spokane Partnership
- Hello For Good
- Hope Street Coalition
- Mayor's Advisory Council on Downtown Environment
- Regional Governance Group
- Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium
- Spokane Homeless Coalition
- Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners
- Spokane Realtors Association

Providers

- Catholic Charities
- City Gate
- Family Promise
- The Guardians
- Jewels Helping Hands
- The Salvation Army
- Truth Ministries
- UGM
- Volunteers of America

Elected leaders

- Spokane City Council
- Spokane County Commission
- Spokane Valley City Council

"In partnership with others, we want to build on what Spokane already has to create full-spectrum solutions that address addiction, housing (from shelters to supported housing and in between), job re-training, employment, accountability, and self-sufficiency."

*Hello for Good
February 9, 2022*

Socialize the plan for feedback

Plans start with a vision. Undergo refinement. Require leadership. And thrive on support. It takes a community focused on a common outcome to be successful.

Organizational

- NHHS
- CED
- SPD
- SFD

Advisors and regulators

- CHHS board
- CHCBD board
- Continuum of Care board
- HUD Region 10

Elected leaders

- Federal delegation
- Spokane City Council
- Spokane County Commission (housing)
- State delegation

Community partners

- Advocates
- Behavioral health
- Downtown Spokane Partnership
- Faith community
- Healthcare
- Hello for Good
- Higher education
- Landlord association
- Mayor's Advisory Council on Downtown Environment
- Service providers
- Spokane Homeless Coalition
- Spokane Housing Authority
- Spokane Regional Health District
- Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners
- Tribes
- Veterans

“Quick fixes and reactive measures are attractive but often non-effective in the long run. Both the private and public sectors have vested interests for immediate action. However, an imbalanced approach may unnecessarily divert resources without achieving the goal of reducing homelessness.”

Berry Consulting, Inc.

Get individuals emergency housed



Create additional emergency housing while waiting for permanent supportive housing (types, locations, duration, emergent, drop-in)

Promote and build trust between homeless and the City through compassionate and social healing (community feedback)	Planning
Provide adequate emergency shelter (DSP proposal)	In progress
Find, develop, and utilize an all-purpose shelter that addresses the needs of warming, cooling, and clean air for the most vulnerable (hello for good)	In progress
Improve, where needed, City contracts for housing and service providers to become more performance based and outcome driven (hello for good)	In progress
Fully fund exiting regional shelter system (community feedback)	Planning
Provide avenues to fast track the needs of the higher-functioning individuals on a path to self-sufficiency (hello for good)	In progress
Improve the coordinated entry system (hello for good)	In progress
Focus all emergency housing models on housing outcomes (Berry Consulting, Inc.)	Planning
House individuals during treatment and help them navigate to housing while in treatment (Berry Consulting, Inc.)	In progress
Implement a "no walk in/off" policy that prevents loitering problems in the neighborhood (Berry Consulting, Inc.)	Planning
Grow regional resources as a system of dispersed, smaller, service-specific sites (Berry Consulting, Inc.)	Planning
Ensure supporting services are appropriately matched to housing first options and educate those accessing services and the community about the existing resources (Berry Consulting, Inc.)	Planning

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Provide on-demand services



Provide individualized, on-demand services (examples of initial successes including bridge, young adults, veterans, next steps)

Provide adequate access to emergency and social services for all individuals in need by equitably distributing services across the county (DSP proposal)

Planning

Strengthen mental health and addiction resources (community feedback)

Planning

The provision of 'Housing First' low and no barrier housing should be succeeded by a dramatic expansion of treatment programs for individuals who suffer from mental illness and substance abuse disorder (DSP proposal)

Planning

Reinforce a strategy of separating the populations of those experiencing homelessness and partner with the right organization best suited to meet their needs. Customize solutions for the distinct populations (families, men, women, single parents, shelter-resistant, criminal) (hello for good)

In progress

Coordinate co-deploy and outreach teams for service connectivity to leverage business and other community partnership (community feedback)

Planning

With providers, expand number of beds and resources for mental health, addictions, and co-occurring disorders; advocate for more funding and legislative support. Address funding, staffing, and training issues. (hello for good)

Planning

Expand the number of beds and resources for mental health, addictions and co-occurring disorders and advocate for more funding and legislative support

Planning

Expand number of long-term senior care beds (about 200) and resources for those without a traditional housing path; advocate for funding and legislative support

Planning

Prioritize. Collaborate. Deliver Results.



Coordinate resources



Establish a command center to focus on individuals experiencing chronic homelessness with an emphasis on equity (navigation center)

Expand the ability to intervene in the lives of people who are struggling with mental illness and addiction, and provide housing and support that is appropriate to their circumstances

Planning

Enhance the Coordinated Entry System, which currently over-emphasizes the most critical needs, to get individuals help before they find themselves in a critical situation and increase transparency across providers (Berry Consulting, Inc.)

In progress with CoC

Evaluate use of technology to for potential self-referral connection to resources (community feedback)

Planning

Establish an intake center to help meet the needs of the community with triage and system navigation services (Berry Consulting, Inc.)

Planning

Expand and train Diversion as an emerging best practice for case managers, providers, or those helping with system navigation that occurs BEFORE coordinated entry to fast track individuals ready for specific housing options (WA State Dept. of Commerce)

In progress with CoC

Expand weekly shelter provider call to be focused on solving specific client or system issues with resources and authority to make changes or improvements. A command center approach encapsulates as much decision making power in that structure as possible (Challenge Seattle)

Planning

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Know them by name



Utilize real-time data (by-name list, CMIS, coordinated entry)

Address the constraints of our CMIS/HMIS system to have solid real-time data for the needs of our shelters, providers, City, and law enforcement (hello for good)

In progress; RFP planned

Evaluate other models for data analytics best practices to improve current system (community feedback)

In progress; RFP planned

Overhaul the HMIS/CMIS systems so that accurate data and performance measures better ensure that efforts are achieving the desired results (Hope Street Coalition)

Planning

Use outreach and coordination between every single system that encounters people experiencing homelessness to quickly identify and engage people experiencing homelessness into services that result in a housing solution (CoC)

In progress

Work with shelter and service providers, street outreach teams, and other partners to build a relationship of trust with individuals to identify individuals and their needs. Decrease the ability to remain anonymous as a recipient of services while maintaining some level of privacy.

Planning

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Maximize case management effectiveness



Employ qualified, experienced case workers and those with lived experience

Wrap case management effort around those doing the work (community feedback)

Planning

Review effectiveness of City-funded outreach program

Planning

Develop and build more outreach teams for those experiencing homelessness (hello for good)

Planning

Offer training to establish clear expectations and alignment to outreach program requirements that focuses on expectations rather than prescribed methodology (community feedback)

Planning

Develop case management framework to build a set of universal set of expectations among providers to move individuals through the regional homelessness system of resources

Planning

Identify and implement staff trainings such as diversion, progressive engagement, motivational interviewing, and trauma-informed care (CoC)

In progress

Improve Case Conferencing mechanisms to effectively meet the need of the most vulnerable (CoC)

In progress

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Deliver transparency & accountability to retain buy-in



Focus on transparency, accountability, and evaluation with regular reporting to the public (dashboard, quarterly report-outs that focus on accomplishments and look forward to seasonal considerations)

Bring CoC, CHHS, City Council, and County Commission together (hello for good/community feedback)

In progress

Establish cadence of regular meetings with housing and service providers on needs and metrics; public the performance data and plans for improving outcomes, including where the private

In progress

Improve data sharing and focus resources on measurable outcomes (Berry Consulting, Inc.)

In progress

Establish a strong public messaging plan of data, direction, and accomplishment (Hello for Good)

In progress

Pass control of grant dollars to designated non-profits to manage through an RFP process to depoliticize decisions and put critical decisions in the hands of career professionals in this very specialized area of expertise (Hello for Good)

Planning

Gain local data and research that demonstrates cost-savings and effectiveness of focuses reduction in chronic homelessness and number of unsheltered people (Hello for Good)

Planning

Educate the community regularly on importance of these initiatives (hello for good)

In progress

Provide additional paid support staff to the Continuum of Care to assist with the work of implementing the 5-Year Plan (Berry Consulting, Inc.)

In progress

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Create more housing inventory



Set the expectation that the outcome is preventing and exiting homelessness through a commitment to removing barriers to affordable housing.

Meet the demand for workforce housing by reducing regulations on an overly regulated housing market (DSP proposal)

In progress

Ensure a system-wide approach to housing within our region, including Growth Management Act issues, and the creation of City and legislative actions that reduce the onerous barriers to both existing and new housing (hello for good)

Planning

Develop private landlord partnerships that offer scattered housing throughout the county with commitments from local landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers coupled with incentives to landlords to help close the market rate gap (Berry Consulting, Inc.)

Planning

Explore possibilities for strategic use of HOME Homeless Assistance Program dollars to convert existing motels into apartment units in which clients can “transition in place” as case management support enables them to access lasting income through access to employment or disability (Berry Consulting, Inc.)

In progress

Develop, educate and incentivize more affordable housing developers to increase the overall building capacity of the region to relieve labor and supply shortages.

Planning

Reconvene regional housing task force to evaluate land-use, zoning, and other policy strategies to improve housing inventory and prevent inventory loss. (community engagement)

Planning

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Expect compassionate accountability



Develop the tools to provide compassionate resources that can facilitate a missing level of accountability for and on behalf of the individuals, neighborhoods, and businesses impacted by homelessness with respect and dignity that comes with shared responsibility.

Interpret and apply the Martin v. City of Boise decision to enforce laws currently on the books, which are already compliant with its requirements (DSP proposal)

In progress

Support community efforts to tackle the fentanyl and opioid epidemics that is a significant contributor to housing destabilization

In progress

Enforce effective policies around homelessness, such as camping, sit-lie, drug-free zones, and other high-impact ordinances (hello for good)

Planning

Create policy that supports the plan for compassionate accountability

Planning

Establish key performance indicators that hold service providers accountable to outcomes as a condition of funding (community feedback)

Planning

Consider smart goal expectations for service recipients that are a measurable user-defined pathway to success (community feedback)

Planning

Reestablish the basis for proactive/neighborhood policing by returning to the 'reasonable suspicion' evidentiary standard and amending other legislative actions that have dramatically reduced the efficacy of neighborhood policing in Washington (DSP proposal)

In progress

Amend drug legalization by restoring common sense restrictions on readily accessible, highly addictive drugs (DSP proposal)

Planning

As COVID-19 becomes endemic, the private and public sectors should prepare and coordinate the return of employees and visitors that bring vibrancy and a sense of safety to our streets (DSP proposal)

Planning

Evaluate therapeutic courts for effectiveness in connectivity to services and responsibility for action and lessons learned (community feedback)

In progress

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