

# SEEING ALL OUR HOMELESS

## *Steps to homeFULLness for everyone in Pierce County*

Some core questions for which answers can guide development of new strategies for addressing homelessness. How would you answer these questions? Help by providing your thoughts.

*Collected participant responses from participants at 28 April conference:*

*“Facing Pierce County Homelessness – Creating HomeFULLness”*

### **1. SHARED GOALS: What if we add “homeless prevention” to our “Rapid Re-Housing and Diversion” strategies? What are the pros and cons?**

- Seems sensible, but I suppose it wouldn't add money or staff so may dilute effectiveness of rapid re-housing, which seems to be effective.
- Preventing homelessness would save so much money in the long haul.
- Wonderful idea! If families & individuals can get services before they become homeless it would be amazing. I notice in my work as a social worker that often families need a short time of support, if it is done well and they are able to help themselves.
- Screening process to keep mentally changeable.
- Pros: a) reduced costs to society through other agencies, e.g., jails, ERs; b) less trash in community; c) lower crime. Cons: [none]
- View individual motivations to move from surviving to thriving! People have their answers now to overcome barriers to ensure homefullness.
- Homeless prevention should be added because landlords are exploiting tenants, increasing rent on fixed income. [providing] healthy socialization by tenants, providing outdoor benches and tables, pets. We need Tenant legal advocates.
- Just fix one at a time, after one works then combine with the other possibly.
- ✓ Yes! Yes. Because homeless should have help (or maybe) homes.
- Pros: calls attention to issue, provides solutions. Cons: objections.
- Homeless prevention is key. It is definitely a pro with no cons.
- Pros: coordinated entry, case management. Cons: homeless prevention overlaps into rapid rehousing and diversion.
- We should be thinking long term to building codes, urban planning to account for energy use & climate effects. Land trusts to keep housing affordable long term.
- I understand the reasoning behind this, but I would be careful to not warrant a hand out. In other words, just to prevent homelessness without accountability would be useless.
- Absolutely needed! Prevention is always the way to go, we do this with physical health, it should be done with homelessness also.
- There are no cons.
- Add it – Pro = Prevention = building more housing and increasing access to the housing that exists through policy change. Cons: funds for those facing homelessness.
- What would prevention look like? Can we have several programs that connect people rather than professionals?
- Prevention is essential. Why should it be necessary for families to lose everything when it is possible to prevent the trauma and the cascading problems caused when housing is lost.
- I actually thought Associated Ministries does this already. I went to a breakfast where they helped a man prior to his house foreclosing and prevented him from being homeless. I think there should definitely be prevention strategies. Pro is obvious and outweighs cons.

- Pro = puts “homeless” first, as the problem. Con = How best to agree on particular policies.

## **2. SHARED ORGANIZATION: How can we organize to reach those goals?**

- “911” for homelessness, linked for clear delineation for each agency involved in response.
- Perhaps create a coalition similar to Graduate Tacoma on homelessness. Pairing together NGOs, government and funders with people affected by homelessness.
- Elected officials. Policy changes. Conferences like today. How about an Fb page or social media plan that connects us?
- Skilled homeless, preferred construction workers, retired under-served people of color in meaningful positions for building homes.
- It sounds like this is being done. 1:15 pm session in Rm D.
- Ensure everyone who provides service has [a] professional devoted to hand off answers to people and find new source of work once successful.
- Better phone contact with individual or family directly with Assoc. Ministry. Other agencies phone contact with Assoc. Ministry. Realtor also advocacy for renter and homeless. Legal [?] liability for churches.
- Behavioral and health integration is so important.
- By saving up money!
- Involve people who have real life experience. Don’t talk at us...talk with us!!! Listen! Start with the grass roots approach.
- Attend city council meetings.
- Education places a great resource. If we focus on educating people to be financially stable and not just to remember data, our society will survive.
- Perhaps a public forum such as this one to share constructive ideas to set goals (attainable) in place.
- At least quarterly meetings together as a unit of all the agencies.
- Reach beyond governmental and charitable sources to grass roots, community-based organizations.
- Create commitments across municipalities – how can we pressure those who think it’s someone else’s problem?
- More forums like this – advertise these events through partners and social media.
- I think people who come to forums should post to social media more. There are stories that need to be shared. The average person doesn’t understand what it’s like to end up on the street.
- Forum of concerned professionals & constituents on a regular basis, scheduled monthly.
- Increase community land trusts. I.e.: housing trust funds.

## **3. SHARED INFORMATION: How can we know that we are making progress? That our individual efforts make a difference?**

- Both quantitative and qualitative data. Ask people – are you getting through APUH? What was your experience? What is it like to experience homelessness in Tacoma compared to Key Peninsula?
- ...know we are making progress: when my neighbors stop stigmatizing homelessness. ...know individual efforts are making a difference: Reduction in size of tent cities, a cleaner community, less garbage strewn around encampments.
- Every human in our community takes steps toward thriving efforts. We can do this.
- Document # of families & individuals secure in homes that are affordable, safe, warm. Listen to residents. We care for one another.
- Ask questions of our homeless.
- The shelters are helping and getting homes for homeless is amazing.

- Look @ metrics from Nat'l Meeting on Housing and Stability Site. Train & hire people who were homeless previously.
- Decreased homelessness.
- When you are getting positive results. When we have permanent homes for everyone.
- More affordable, sustainable, energy-efficient housing available.
- There should be some kind of measuring system in place.
- Come together in conversation on a regular basis.
- Reach out beyond government and service providers. The homeless and their families don't have all the answers, but they can certainly identify problems you may not have seen.
- Reduced impact on emergency services.
- We'll pass/change policy that results in immediate relief and we'll start building lowest income affordable housing.
- We can share success stories and Gerrit can tell us when numbers improve.
- Community listening infrastructure – database & community engagement connected person.
- Have News Tribune have a dedicated weekly on-line column with anecdotes & data from CSS stability site and other data sources.

#### **4. SHARED COMMUNITY: How can we enlist the understanding and support of all our citizens and businesses?**

- Encourage opportunities for being around the homeless and better understand them as people and the difference it would make for everyone if homelessness is better addressed / prevented.
- Stop calling it solutions for homelessness. Homelessness has become such a loaded term with so many negative connotations. Since housing is the reason and solution, let's talk about housing instead.
- Offer to bring them lunch & education. 😊 Commercials on local station.
- Education, direct support to small business to allow homeless people to use restrooms in their businesses.
- Public service announcements on major media outlets to reduce stigma and promote agencies involved.
- Individual efforts towards collective action – BOTH ARE REQUIRED. Invest in Relationship and Collaboration skills.
- More local conferences like this.
- More neighborhood groups? Church organization support and guidance for neighborhoods.
- I think you can, because helping homeless should tell you, you are helping poor and hurting.
- Listen to the community! Involve people with lived experience at all levels of decision-making.
- Make people aware of the problem, give out the numbers with the solutions.
- It should start with the financial institutions, the banks who lend and charge should be accountable to help the community. Citizens and business can volunteer and be patrons but ultimately financial institutions should be the solutions as they are the ones with the resources.
- Fund raisers. Education. City Council meetings. Holding community forums. College campus fairs. Community events.
- Conversations that are specific. Have specific asks – could be land, money, co-ops, developing communities with schools & businesses in walking distances. Finding common benefits.
- Willpower / desire to help @ community citizen level is paramount to solving root cause. We are apathetic, that's reality, but if we can quantify cost of jails & ER and all the ancillary costs of things trending to homelessness (job attendance, etc.) & get info out in community, we can shift this segment of the population to perhaps support political/gov't solutions.

- They need to be more informed. Perhaps even visit a homeless community.
- Become more visible.
- You can't ignore those who are too self-involved or profit-driven to participate, and move on. 2. Make us believe that the time we contribute will help lead to constructive change.
- More public education. Cost/benefit analysis of prevention vs. emergency response. Create action network – let us know where we need to show up, write letters, call, etc. Even those of us who are engaged know some but not all.
- Appeal to humanity. Educate on actual causes of homelessness & the housing deficit. Associated Ministries educate all faith communities on behavioral health tax!!!
- Education. You can't alienate or distance yourself from a problem when you know the truth.
- Keep networking.
- Increase resources. Increase public education. Increase public awareness.
- Start registration of potential volunteers through 2-1-1. Have business cards downloadable with resources to pass out to those who are homeless and soliciting assistance. (AM is a bit too long.)

### **OTHER IDEAS? Your strategies for reducing homelessness starting now?**

- Stop raising rent and set amounts – some renters rent a crappy house for more than it's worth.
- More resources available widely (day centers, shelters, treatment).
- Treating homeless individuals as people, not less than.
- Find the lowest cost way to “house” people in community – tent camps with services, perhaps, to get as many people as possible stabilized and connected to services. It needs a face.
- Center those experiencing homelessness in any effort to address it.
- Since we have an emergency, is there any chance we can use the SS Cape Island and the SS Cape Intrepid to house people now?
- Allow 100 units in 100 days with homeless people skilled to carry out the trash with paid-for work while providing shelter in temp. and supportive services.
- An emphasis on the individual's responsibility to get a good education, job training, develop a value system away from ostentatious consumerism. Transportation to work from outlying areas; encourage and reward employers & fellow employee who can pool w/ homeless. “Adopt-a-rider” program w/ reduced costs to giver.
- So much information all in a few hours!! We need names, contacts, information, review of how we can use them. Just who do we call? Transportation is so hard when we are outside of Tacoma – outside areas of Pierce Cty.
- Improve bus services 24/7. Increase frequency and access. We need rent ceiling for people on fixed income.
- The state to offer more positions of learning for homeless to feel more confident in helping others in their “family” (neighbors).
- Make stores for homeless only and everything free. The store person gives money to the poor.
- Community organization model. Start with community's input. Ask our opinions and listen to us.
- Provide educators in the school districts teaching the importance of marriage, staying married, family life. 2. Provide incentives, tax advantages to marriage. 3. Make divorce very hard to obtain.
- Allow the homeless community to help themselves, to come out with the solutions. Empower them to do so.
- Collaboration with systems and community members. Host homes. Shared housing. Ask the homeless – engagement. \*Housing for offenders (youth who have sexually offended, level 1, 2, and 3) \*
- Tiny houses go up fast, are energy efficient & sustainable if done right and are affordable if using the right model. Think Habitat for Humanity & sweat equity.

- Identify the problem before it becomes major. Mental health help, also drug & alcohol addictions.
- Bring productive jobs into the community. Assist those interested in establishing land trusts. This will help establish economic stability, thus preventing another generation of homelessness.
- Use health in all policies to promote housing as a social determinant of health. (More actions like the Tiki ordinance that increased notice to relocate days to 90.) Ban the box. Document recording fee. Eliminate 3x rent income requirements.
- Let's put a cap on every vacant lot in Tacoma, and start building more housing across the county.
- Great idea to find a way to coordinate volunteers – get away from “silo effect.”
- Work toward electing officials who will advocate for universal health care & single payer.
- If we had other agencies, churches, individuals go out to the homeless people on the streets and connect to find out what the needs are, driving them to shelters or their own homes, church buildings as temporary shelters, already existing shelters we can make a difference.
- Include “health” as a focus in ALL proposals.