

2017 Kittitas County Homelessness and Affordable Housing Plan

February 2017

*A home for everyone and
everyone in their home.*



Approval

We, the Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners, approve the 2017 Kittitas County Homelessness and Affordable Housing Plan today, February 21, 2017.



Paul Jewell, District #1, Chair



Laura Osiadacz, District #2, Vice Chair



Obie O'Brien, District #3

ATTEST:

Trink Jirmon
Clerk of the Board



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
Summary.....	5
Background of the Homelessness and Affordable Housing Plan.....	7
Process.....	8
Vision, Values, and Areas of Focus	9
Kittitas County Homelessness and Housing Profile	10
Geography.....	10
Population.....	10
People	11
Employment.....	12
Income	12
Poverty	12
Homelessness.....	13
Housing	13
Forces of Change	15
Community Survey	20
Local Services Asset and Gap Analysis.....	24
Public Input.....	25
Goals, Strategies, Priorities, and Measures.....	26
Conclusion and Next Steps.....	28

Acknowledgements

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Summary

The Homelessness and Affordable Housing Committee (HAHC), appointed by the Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), is responsible for the development, updating, and ensuring implementation of the Kittitas County Homelessness and Affordable Housing Plan. The HAHC established a subcommittee in March 2016 to review the current plan, analyze current homelessness and housing data, and draft a revised plan for 2017. This plan is a combination of both community priorities for addressing homelessness and affordable housing, as well as funding priorities for the Kittitas County housing and homelessness funds.

Participants in the development of the plan included representatives from housing and homeless support agencies and networks, public health, faith communities, local governments, early learning, substance use treatment, domestic violence, veterans, and people with disabilities. Feedback from the general public was also gathered through a community survey and public forums.

A good plan starts with a clear community vision. What are we striving for in Kittitas County? What do we want the future to look like? After a facilitated discussion among the participants, the follow vision was developed: *A home for everyone and everyone in their home*. Core values to be maintained and enhanced in order to meet this vision include safety and health, stability and sustainability, affordability and income, and community. This plan will seek to make progress towards the vision through policy, infrastructure, and programs.

Local homelessness and housing data was examined from three main data sources: the US Census American Community Survey, the Washington State Office of Financial Management, and the HopeSource Community Needs Assessment. Additionally, assessments were conducted of community opinions, forces of change, and gaps and assets. Key conclusions from this information that were considered in the development of the plan priorities included:

- Kittitas County's population has grown and will continue to grow considerably, putting pressure on the need for housing and homelessness resources.
- Kittitas County has high unemployment rates, indicating a lack of jobs that pay a living wage.
- The presence of a major university in Kittitas County both puts pressure on the housing market, increasing costs, and reducing availability and also presents unique partnership opportunities.
- Income is considerably lower in Kittitas County compared to Washington State and poverty is higher, making it difficult to afford housing.
- A large proportion of the housing stock was built before 1970 and a high percentage of housing is renter occupied.
- Homelessness is an issue that many people in Kittitas County don't know much about or don't fully understand.
- Affordable housing is a large concern among the general public.
- Most people agree that increased services such as sheltering, transportation, job training, mental health, and substance use treatment are effective in addressing homelessness.
- While there are multiple resources for low-income housing and rental assistance, it is not enough to meet the need. Waiting lists are long and funds are limited.
- Community engagement and cross-collaborations need to be expanded to be able to address homelessness and housing issues.

- Services should include support with job opportunities, training, and skills to help people gain self-sufficiency.

As a result of these conclusions, three goals were developed:

1. Increase opportunities for homeless to receive shelter services and other support services in both Upper and Lower Kittitas County.
2. Increase access to affordable housing in Kittitas County.
3. Increase community awareness, education, and engagement around homelessness and housing issues in Kittitas County.

Each goal has community strategies, county housing and homelessness funding priorities, and measures to track progress toward the goals. The plan will be monitored annually and updated regularly by the Kittitas County Homelessness and Affordable Housing Committee.

Background of the Homelessness and Affordable Housing Plan

In 2002, the Washington State Legislature enacted Substitute House Bill 2060 “An act relating to funds for operating and maintenance of low-income housing projects and for innovative housing demonstration projects” into law. The law required each county in Washington State to charge a surcharge on almost all recorded documents. The intent of this act is to assist in the development and preservation of affordable low-income housing to address critical local housing needs. The law was amended in 2007. Activities eligible to be funded with these funds can be found in Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 36.22.178 and include the acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of low-income housing projects; building operation and maintenance costs of low-income housing projects; rental assistance vouchers for low-income housing; and operating costs for emergency shelters.

In 2005, the Washington State Legislature passed Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 2163, “An act relating to preventing and ending homelessness in the State of Washington.” The law required each county Auditor in Washington State to charge additional surcharges on most recorded documents. These funds are intended to be used to accomplish the goals of the local homeless housing plan aimed at addressing short-term and long-term housing for homeless persons and eliminating homelessness. Counties were also required to have a Homeless Housing Task Force to prepare and recommend to its local government legislative authority a ten-year homeless housing plan for its jurisdictional area. Activities eligible for funding can be found in Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.185C.050 and include rent and furnishings for homeless persons, developing affordable housing for homeless persons, services for people at risk of homelessness, housing subsidies, emergency eviction programs, rental subsidies, temporary services for people leaving state institutions, outreach to homeless people, development of the homelessness and housing plan, and other activities to reduce and prevent homelessness as identified in the plan.

The Homelessness and Affordable Housing Committee (HAHC), appointed by the Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), is responsible for the development, updating, and ensuring implementation of the Kittitas County Homelessness and Affordable Housing Plan, including dispersing the housing and homelessness funds in accordance with the plan and state law. The HAHC established a subcommittee in March 2016 to review the current plan, analyze current homelessness and housing data, and draft a revised plan for 2017.

This plan is a combination of both community priorities for addressing homelessness and affordable housing, as well as funding priorities for the Kittitas County housing and homelessness funds as described above.

Process

Under State law each County is required to update their Homelessness and Affordable Housing Plans. The Kittitas County Plan is required to be updated in 2017. Under the auspices of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), the Kittitas County Homelessness and Affordable Housing Committee (HAHC) formed a Subcommittee in March 2016 to prepare a draft plan. The Subcommittee met six times between March 2016 and October 2016 to analyze current data related to homelessness and affordable housing, and embark on several discrete activities including:

- Developing a vision and core values.
- Gathered local data related to homelessness, housing, and services.
- Assessed events, trends, and factors affecting homelessness and housing.
- Conducted a community-wide survey in August and September with over 2000 responses gauging awareness of homelessness and housing issues.
- Conducted a county-wide Assets and Gaps analysis.
- Established Goals, Strategies, Priorities, and Measures for 2017 funding priorities.
- Held two public forums in November and incorporated public comment into the draft plan.
- Presented the draft plan to the Homelessness and Affordable Housing Committee for approval.
- Presented the plan to the Board of County Commissioners for approval.
- Submitted the plan to the Washington State Department of Commerce.
- Communicated the plan to the Kittitas County community.

The 2017 Plan will guide the HAHC and the BOCC in approving grants and funds for efforts related to homelessness and affordable housing. It will also hopefully be used among community organizations, networks, and partnerships to guide activities around homelessness and affordable housing. The plan will be reviewed and assessed annually by the HAHC.

Vision and Values

A good plan starts with a clear community vision. The Subcommittee members spent a meeting discussing and considering the following questions as they relate to homelessness and housing issues in Kittitas County:

- What are we striving for in Kittitas County?
- What do we want the future to look like with respect to homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
- What does it mean to prevent and reduce homelessness?
- What does it mean to have safe, healthy, affordable housing?

The discussion resulted in several themes which were translated in a vision statement to guide future activities, core values to consider during the planning process, and areas of focus for activities.

Vision

A home for everyone and everyone in their home.

Values

- Safety and Health: Housing in our community will be free from hazards, be protected from crime, and provide healthy places to live.
- Stability and Sustainability: Our community members will be capable and well-supported to maintain stable and sustainable places to live.
- Affordability and Income: Housing costs will not be burdensome and the community will support income levels that can sustain homes.
- Community: Housing will promote a sense of community and the community will support housing and homelessness initiatives.

Areas of focus

- Policy: Legislation, local regulation, funding priorities, partnerships, community planning, long-term solutions, advocacy, and education.
- Infrastructure: Increasing, maintaining, and improving affordable housing stock; and ensuring adequate organizational capacity to address homelessness and housing issues in the community.
- Programs: Public and private programs in place to reduce and prevent homelessness, increase income and affordability, and ensure safe and healthy homes.

Kittitas County Homelessness and Housing Profile

To get a picture of what homelessness and housing issues look like in Kittitas County, data was examined from three main sources:

- US Census American Community Survey 2010-2014 5 year estimates
- The Washington State Office of Financial Management, Forecasting and Research Division, 2015 estimates
- The 2014 Continuum of Care Community Needs Assessment of Kittitas County by HopeSource

Geography

Kittitas County is located in Central/Eastern Washington State between Snoqualmie Pass in the Cascade Mountains on the West border and the Columbia River on the East border. King County, the largest population base in the state lies to the West, Chelan County to the North, Grant County to the East, and Yakima County to the South. The majority of services not available in Kittitas County are available in Yakima or King Counties.



Population

Kittitas County is a rural county with approximately 43,000 people. About 45% of the population lives in unincorporated areas of the county. Population growth is on the rise as seen in the tables below.

Population Change 1990, 2000, Current

Location	Year		Change: 1990- 2000	Year 2010	Change: 2000-2010
	1990	2000			
Total Kittitas County	26, 725	33,362	24.83%	40,915	22.64%
Cle Elum	1,778	1,755	-1.29%	1,872	6.67%
Ellensburg	12,360	15,414	24.71%	18,174	17.91%
Kittitas	843	1,105	31.08%	1,381	24.98%
Roslyn	869	1,017	17.03%	893	-12.19%
South Cle Elum	457	457	0.00%	531	16.41%
Washington State	4,866,663	5,894,143	21.11%	6,724,540	14.09%
United States	248,709,873	281,421,906	13.15%	307,006,550	9.09%

**Projected Population Change, Kittitas County
2010- 2040**

Period	Change	Births	Deaths	Migration
2010-15	1677	2114	1509	1072
2015-20	2663	2331	1686	2018
2020-25	2694	2539	1868	2023
2025-30	2618	2669	2109	2058
2030-35	2465	2790	2358	2033
2035-40	2404	2941	2569	2032

People

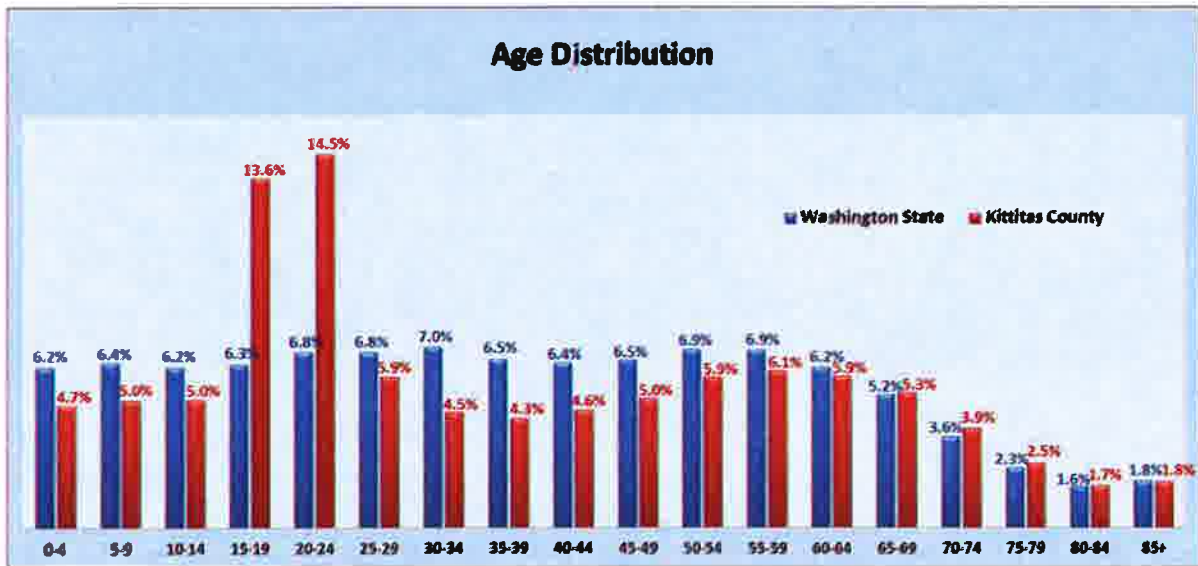
The people who live in Kittitas County are diverse in culture, background, values, and beliefs. Surrounding counties are more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, however racial and ethnic diversity in the county is increasing. Due to the presence of Central Washington University, we have a much higher proportion of our population in the 20-24 age range. Education levels are comparable to the rest of the state with a slightly higher percentage of the population with a high school diploma or equivalency.

Educational Attainment

Education Level	Kittitas County	WA State
Less than 9th grade	3.10%	4.10%
9-12 Grade- no Diploma	5.90%	6.00%
High School Diploma or Equivalency	27.50%	23.80%
Some College	24.20%	25.20%
Associate Degree	7.10%	9.50%
Bachelor's Degree	20.50%	20.00%
Graduate or Professional Degree	11.70%	11.30%

KITTITAS COUNTY RACE & ETHNICITY

	Population	Percentage
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	3,452	8.3%
White alone	35,460	85.0%
Black or African American alone	379	0.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	358	0.9%
Asian alone	902	2.2%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander alone	0	0.0%
Some other race alone	26	0.1%
Two or more races	1,128	2.7%



Employment

The unemployment rate in Kittitas County is 9.3% compared to 8.8% statewide (not a statistically significant difference.) The unemployment rate is highest among American Indian/Alaska Native (19.7%), people with a high school diploma or GED and no college (11.9%), and people with incomes below the federal poverty level (18.1%). Of the civilian employed population, a significantly higher percentage (23.2%) work in service occupations in Kittitas County compared to statewide (17.6%).

Income

The median household income in Kittitas County is \$45,406 compared to \$60,294 in Washington State. The median family income is \$65,103 compared to \$73,039 in Washington State. The per capita income is \$23,754 compared to \$31,233 in Washington State. In the County, 77% of households have earnings, 29.2% receive social security income, 18.4% receive retirement income, 4.5% receive supplemental security income, 2.9% receive cash public assistance, and 14.5% receive food stamp/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Median earnings for individual workers are as follows:

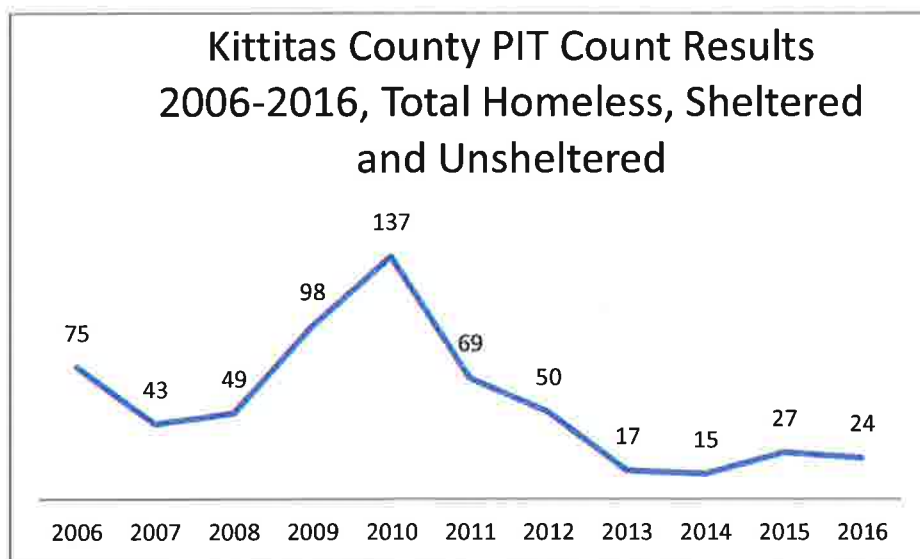
	WA	Kittitas
Median earnings for workers (dollars)	\$33,492	\$20,088
Median earnings for male full-time, year-round workers (dollars)	\$55,168	\$47,349
Median earnings for female full-time, year-round workers (dollars)	\$42,551	\$37,009

Poverty

The percentage of families with income below the poverty level is statistically significantly higher in Kittitas County (12.1%) compared to Washington State (9.1%). In families with single mothers, the poverty rate is 47.6% (compared to 28.3% statewide). Single mother families with children under 5 have a poverty rate of 64.8% (compared to 45.6% statewide).

Homelessness

The primary reasons for homelessness among families are eviction, domestic violence, under-employment/low-income, loss of job, no affordable housing. Data on homelessness is limited, both in quantity and quality. The Washington State Point in Time (PIT) Count of Homeless Persons is the current standard for measuring homelessness. The count is done at a county level in January of each year. The 2016 PIT count for Kittitas County was a total of twenty-four homeless persons. Twenty of those were considered to be unsheltered (four were sheltered), eleven included minors in their households, and five were considered to be chronically homeless. Overall, the PIT count shows that homelessness has decreased in Kittitas County, however the PIT county methodology is limited in accuracy and has also been adjusted over time. For example, in 2012, people who were considered to be “couch-surfing” no longer met the definition of homeless, thus were no longer included in the count, resulting in lower numbers.



Housing

There are an estimated 23,084 housing units in Kittitas County, however only about 518 are considered low-income affordable housing when over 1,000 households below the poverty level are in need of housing. Barriers to rental housing include limited income, credit history, large families, disabilities, citizenship, and unverified income sources. Of the total housing units, 66% are one unit housing units, 21% are two or more unit housing units, and 13% are mobile homes or “specials”. Nearly a third of all housing units were built before 1970 and many of these are owned or occupied by elderly individuals or low-income families who can’t afford repairs and upgrades. Occupied housing units are 42.7% renter occupied.

Although Washington State and Kittitas County are fairly similar in mortgage costs as a percentage of income, Kittitas does have a higher percentage of households with a mortgage over 35% of income.

Percentage of income towards mortgage	WA	Kittitas
Less than 20.0 percent	33.3%	31.3%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	16.9%	15.4%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	13.3%	14.9%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	9.5%	7.8%
35.0 percent or more	27.0%	30.6%

Median rental costs are lower in Kittitas County than in Washington State. However a higher percentage of people pay more than 35% of their income towards rental costs. And this number goes up as income goes down. The recommended percentage of income to be spent on rent is 30%. The fair market rent for a two bedroom home is \$828/month which is over 50% of median household income in Kittitas County. In order to afford this without paying more than 30% of income on rent, a household must earn about \$33,000 annually, or nearly \$16.00/hour (assuming 40 hours/week, 52 weeks/year). A minimum wage earner would have to work 69 hours per week.

Monthly rent	Washington	Kittitas
Less than \$200	1.4%	2.6%
\$200 to \$299	2.5%	4.1%
\$300 to \$499	4.9%	8.0%
\$500 to \$749	16.1%	27.3%
\$750 to \$999	25.6%	28.3%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	31.4%	21.0%
\$1,500 or more	18.0%	8.7%
Median (dollars)	\$ 995	\$ 809

Percent of income towards rent	WA	Kittitas
Less than 15.0 percent	11.1%	6.1%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	12.9%	10.4%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	13.1%	12.8%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	12.3%	7.1%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	9.6%	8.1%
35.0 percent or more	41.0%	55.6%

Forces of Change

What are the current trends, factors, or events influencing homelessness and affordable housing in Kittitas County? What are the threats or opportunities created by forces of change? The planning sub-committee identified eleven themes of forces of change, as seen below. These forces were considered when developing goals and priorities.



Central Washington University: The presence and expected future expansion of CWU has an effect on housing availability, affordability, and quality in Kittitas County, and especially the Ellensburg area.

What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• High rents driven by student population • Insufficient affordable housing stock for students and non-student residents (high demand, low supply) • Much of the affordable housing stock is geared towards students rather than permanent residents (ex: Housing is larger and built for roommates) • Damage caused to current housing stock • Noisy, unsafe neighborhoods • There will be an increased need for housing as CWU expands • Students presences affects the local job market	• Students and CWU help to strengthen local economy • CWU could play larger role in affordable housing planning • CWU could put forth resources towards affordable housing • Student participation in these issues may be an untapped resources • Opportunities to work with students being good neighbors and being part of the community • Work with developers to increase student AND non-student oriented housing

County Purchase of Shady Acres Property: The pending purchase of the mobile home park has an effect on the current residents, availability of affordable housing, and the overall issue of affordable housing.

What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• Potential increase in homelessness or housing instability of displaced individuals, families, and children • County's potential inability to meet the needs of residents • Decreases inventory of affordable housing stock	• Increased awareness of affordable housing • Generate new pathways for increasing affordable housing options in future • Increased focus on quality and safety of housing • Increased focus on the community aspect of housing

Income: Poverty, low-income, dependence on low amounts fixed government sources of income, high costs, and limited availability of living wage jobs, large employers, and a trend away from local industry affect residents' abilities to afford appropriate housing.

What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• Increases homelessness and/or housing instability • High costs of things like day care lead to single income households • High cost of land makes home building expensive • Increased need for affordable housing • Increased need for homelessness services	• Employers are untapped resource for investing in affordable housing • Plan to maintain or increase industry and living wage jobs in the county

Population: Current and changing demographics of the county population as well as growth in the population from people moving from the west side have an effect on the cost of housing and the need for affordable housing.

What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• Increase in home prices and cost of living • Increase in rents • Younger population creates some economic instability and more competition for minimum wage employment and affordable housing • Service and agriculture workforce creates more demand for affordable housing • Retired people, commuters, and recreational homeowners increase property values • I-90 improvements increase cost of living due to growth	• More revenue generated for homeless and housing projects from taxes and recording fees

Natural Disasters: Although out of our immediate control, disasters such as fires, floods, storms, and snow affect people's homes and housing stability.

What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• Destruction of homes could lead to homelessness • Forced evacuations lead to housing instability	• Ensure emergency plans take into account preventing homelessness • Ensure policies support people getting back into housing as quickly as possible

Personal Circumstances: Individual circumstances such as substance issues, mental health issues, jail release, gender, marital or family status, and personal crises can affect the housing status of individuals and families.

What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• Increase in unemployment leading to housing instability and/or homelessness • Lack of access to housing services • Increased pressure on the service system	• Diversify funding for a variety of populations in need • Increase linkages and collaborations between services • Increased focus and awareness on upstream causes of homelessness

Economy: The market and new development have an effect on housing in Kittitas County.

What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• “Housing boom” has led to an increase in home prices and higher rents • Suncadia development creates high cost housing, low wage jobs, propagates income disparities • Potential waterpark development may increase need for affordable housing	• Involve community in the conversation • Explore affordable housing opportunities • UKC needs to plan for affordable housing • Water park may increase job opportunities

Rurality: A rural location presents unique challenges and benefits to homelessness and housing.

What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• Transportation for employment is limited • Housing is dispersed • Housing is older and substandard • Resources are limited • Lack of available subsidized public and private affordable housing—waiting lists	• Strong sense of community helps people out • Collaborations are easier to form and maintain

Government: New and changing regulations, leadership shifts, government based funding, and interlocal collaborations affect housing in Kittitas County.

What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• Changes in state building regulations have increased building costs leading to more expensive housing • Funding is limited or may be decreased • Leadership priorities may shift with elections	• Change in county direction for Shady Acres property allowing residents to stay • County/city collaborations and planning around land use related to affordable housing

Housing Status: The availability of and the status of local housing stock affects the issue.

What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• With the lack of affordable housing, landlords can be “picky” when it comes to tenants • Subsidized housing stock is aging and becoming costly to upkeep • Some housing is unsafe and/or unhealthy	• Healthy and safe homes initiatives • Opportunity to engage landlords in housing issues

Community: Community collaborations and engagement around homelessness and housing are present in Kittitas County.

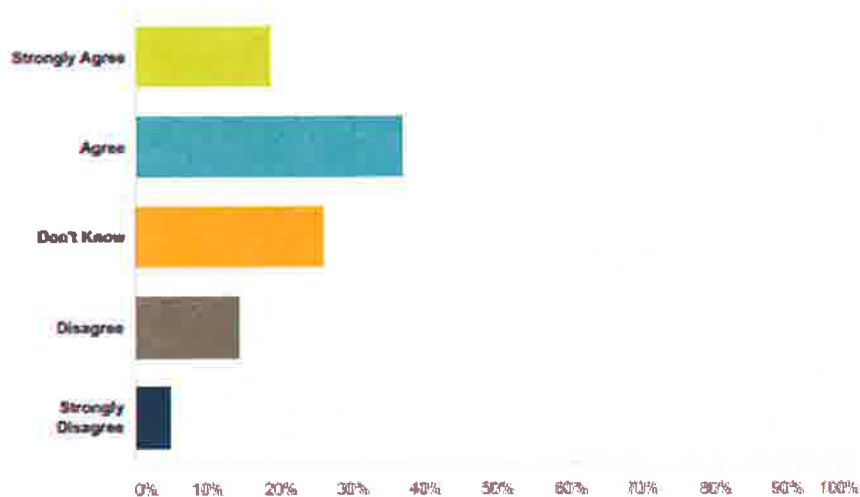
What are the potential or current THREATS generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?	What are the potential or current OPPORTUNITIES generated by this force of change on homelessness and housing in Kittitas County?
• Lack of community engagement at a certain level, lack of awareness of issues	• Cold weather shelter serves as great example of community engagement and collaboration; also shows the need for shelter services • Homelessness and Affordable Housing Network • Homelessness and Affordable Housing planning process • Housing is included as an important element in the county and city comprehensive plans

Community Survey

What is the community's opinion, perception, level of knowledge about homelessness and affordable housing in Kittitas County? This data is from a community survey that was filled out by over 2,000 respondents. The majority of survey respondents were female (60%), had a wide variety of household incomes (about 36% had household incomes of less than \$50,000 per year), owned a home (77%), were either employed (48%) or retired (39%), lived in Ellensburg (59%), and paid less than 30% of their income on housing (61%).

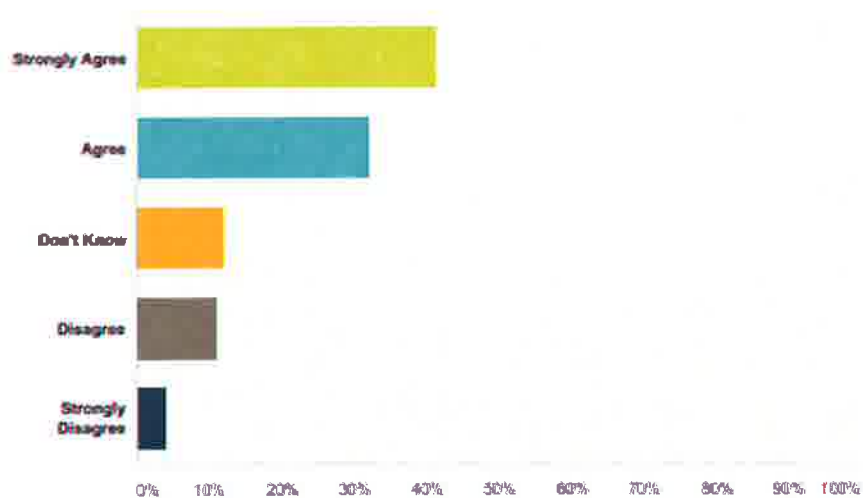
Q1 Homelessness is a problem in Kittitas County

Answered: 2,129 Skipped: 55



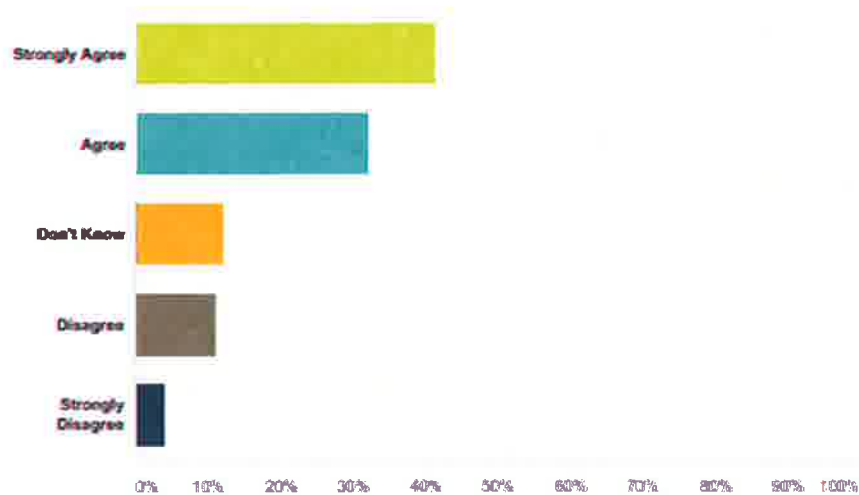
Q2 Housing that people can afford is a problem in Kittitas County.

Answered: 2,129 Skipped: 55



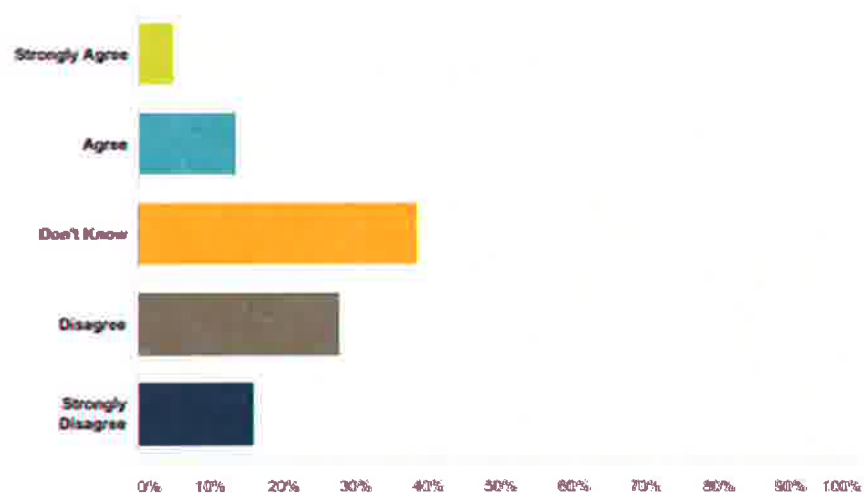
Q2 Housing that people can afford is a problem in Kittitas County.

Answered: 2,120 Skipped: 56



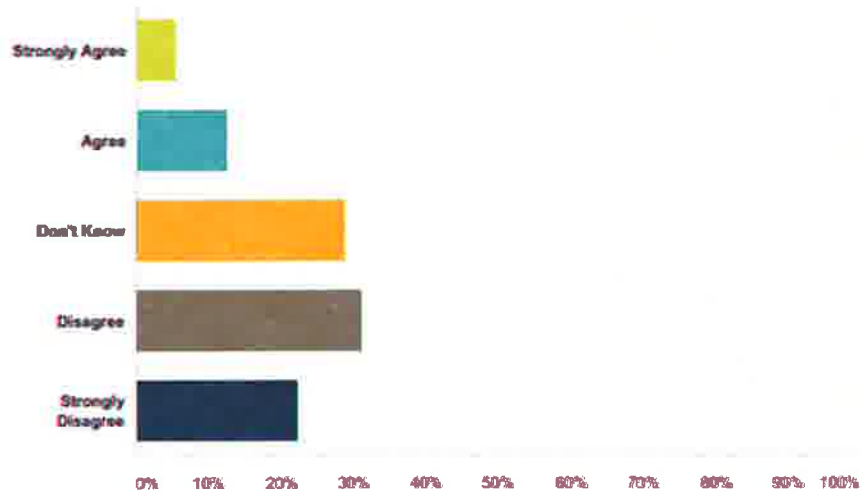
Q3 As a community, we are doing enough to end homelessness

Answered: 2,693 Skipped: 63



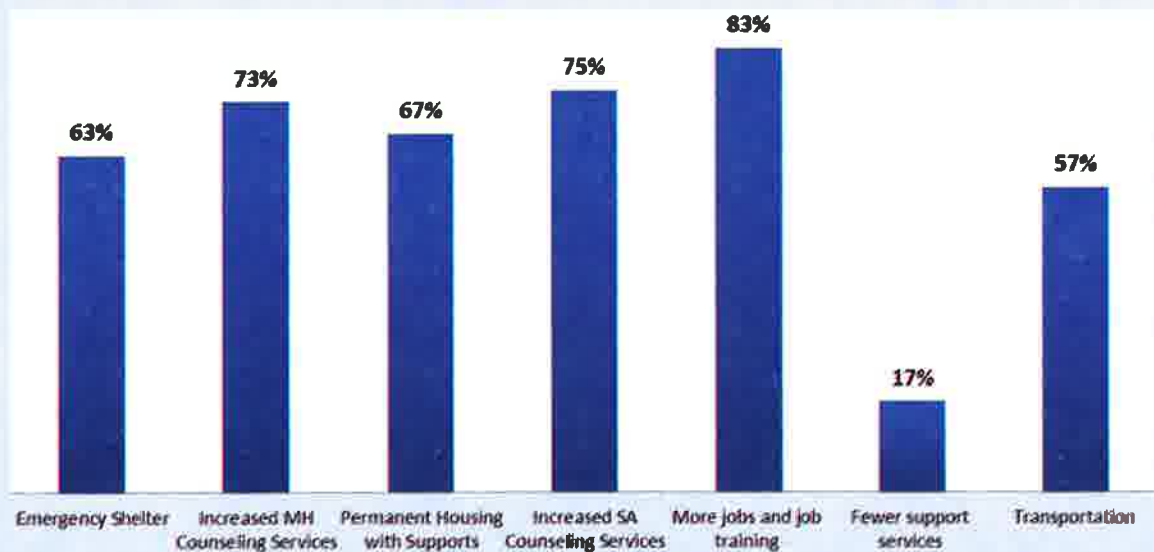
Q4 As a community, we are doing enough to support the creation of affordable housing

Answered: 2,056 Skipped: 89



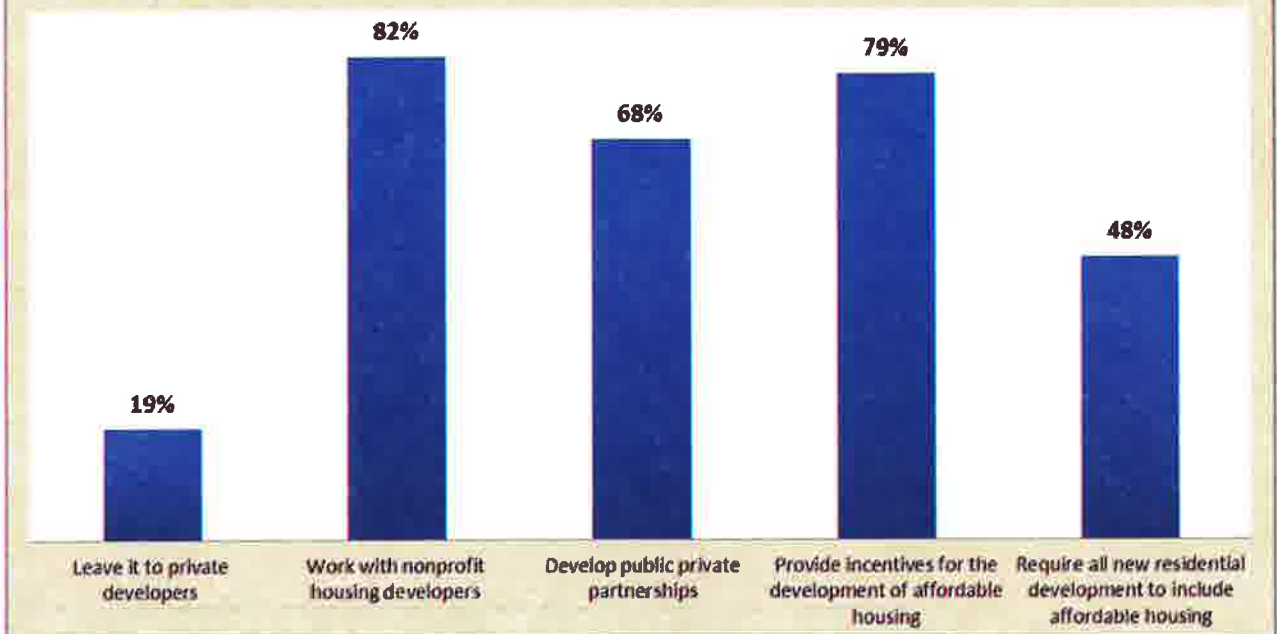
Q5: What do you think would be effective or very effective in ending homelessness in Kittitas County?

■ Survey Responses



Q6: what do you think would be effective or very effective in creating more affordable housing in Kittitas County?

■ Survey Responses



Local Services Asset and Gap Analysis

Assets were defined by the subcommittee as physical and financial resources dedicated to assisting low-income individuals and families establish housing security, and in Kittitas County include:

- 161 units publicly owned subsidized low-income housing
- 598 units privately owned subsidized low-income housing
- Washington State Department of Commerce Consolidated Homeless Grant
- Housing and homelessness funds administered by Kittitas County
- Section 8 and Veterans vouchers managed by Kittitas Housing Authority
- Fifteen bed Cold Weather Shelter

Gaps are defined by the subcommittee as services to address needs that are either missing or inadequate, and in Kittitas County include:

- Subsidized housing waiting lists can exceed two years
- Limited Section 8 and veterans voucher availability
- Job training programs are inadequate for the need
- Drug and alcohol prevention programs need to be expanded
- Mental health services are often difficult to access
- Limited case management resources are available
- Housing needs exceed supply including:
 - Subsidized senior housing
 - Very low income (less than 30% AMI) housing
 - Low income (less than 60% AMI) multi-family housing
 - Workforce (less than 80% AMI) housing
 - Single room occupancy projects
 - Permanent supportive housing
 - Domestic violence/sober/single women sheltering
 - Cold weather shelter/day shelter

Public Input

Public input was garnered through open-ended questions on the community survey and at two public forums in Ellensburg and Cle Elum. Thousands of comments were received through the survey, and pages of discussion were recorded during the public forums. These are most common themes that came up in reviewing both the comments and the discussions

Increasing community engagement and collaboration with various sectors

In general, people wanted to encourage others in the community to get involved in the issues of homelessness and affordable housing. They also wanted to see strong partnerships across different sectors to really effectively address the issues. There was recognition that no single entity or sector can solve the problem alone.

Reducing barriers to housing

Lots of concern was expressed about the amount of barriers experienced in trying to get access to housing. Barriers cited included low-income, single income households, income verification requirements, credit history, minor criminal history, difficult and cumbersome processes, and large families. These are felt to be issues that can contribute to homelessness when it is difficult for someone to access housing.

Increasing home ownership

Not only do people want safe, affordable roofs over their heads, many people desire to move towards homeownership. But similar barriers exist as with renting, and there is a lack of resources and programs that help people work towards owning their own home.

Increasing job opportunities and skills, and moving people toward self sufficiency

Many people expressed concern that homelessness and housing services are enabling and not encouraging self-sufficiency. There needs to be a focus on increasing employment opportunities, getting people out of homelessness, and no longer at risk of homelessness or in need of low-income housing and services. These efforts need to be coupled with homelessness and housing services.

Increasing public awareness

There were many questions expressed in both the survey and the public forums about the nature of the homelessness and affordable housing issues in the county. How big of problems are they? How many people are affected? There is a general lack of awareness about how these issues affect Kittitas County.

Goals, Strategies, Priorities, and Measures

Based on the data and information collected, the planning participants identified the following goals, community strategies to meet those goals, county funding priorities, and measures to track progress.

Goal #1: Increase access to and inventory of affordable housing in Kittitas County.

Community Strategies

- Work with local Housing Authorities to increase Section 8 rental vouchers available for Kittitas County.
- Develop a work group with Kittitas County landlords and property managers to address their barriers to offering housing to low-income individuals and families, including accepting rental vouchers.
- Advocate for County level policy changes which address barriers to accessing affordable housing (i.e. background checks, income requirements, criminal history, credit history, family sizes, etc.)
- Advocate for policy and zoning changes to incorporate incentives for developers to build affordable housing, allow accessory dwelling units on private residential properties, encourage mixed-income developments, and encourage a certain percentage of new development be available for low-income housing.
- Pursue increased funding and grant opportunities through HUD and the State's Consolidated Homeless Grant.
- Convene a local partners working group (including employers, developers, Central Washington University, etc.) to develop and explore new affordable housing funding sources.
- Incorporate programs to connect low income housing clients to services such as mental health services, substance use disorder treatment, and job training and resources.
- Research, explore, and develop programs that support affordable home ownership and increase access to home ownership resources in Kittitas County.
- Explore innovative options for new affordable housing development.

County Funding Priorities

- Increase site-based rental vouchers for people who are homeless with wrap-around case management through current partnerships.
- New affordable housing development.
- Increase access to rental vouchers.
- Promotion of private landlord usage of Section 8 rental vouchers.
- Programs which increase access to affordable home ownership.

Measures

- # of affordable housing units in Kittitas County, and % increase (single family and multi-family units)
- # of individuals and families transitioned from homelessness to affordable housing
- # of rental vouchers distributed, and % increase
- # of individuals who are chronically homeless who received wrap-around services and rental vouchers
- # of individuals accessing other services through low income housing

- # of local policy and code changes to support affordable housing
- # of new home owners through programs

Goal #2: Increase opportunities for homeless to receive shelter services and other support services in both Upper and Lower Kittitas County.

Community Strategies

- Develop and advocate for policy and proposals to increase homeless sheltering in Upper and Lower Kittitas County.
- Pursue grant opportunities to increase funding for homeless sheltering.
- Foster coordination between local agencies through the Housing and Homelessness Network of Kittitas County and increase partnerships with sectors such as schools, employers, Central Washington University, and churches to expand homeless sheltering and homelessness reduction services.
- Incorporate programs to connect shelter clients to services such as mental health services, substance use disorder treatment, pet sheltering, permanent housing resources, and job training and resources.

County Funding Priorities

- Increase capacity and sustainability for all types of homeless sheltering.
- Support proposals which connect shelter clients to services to reduce homelessness.

Measures

- # of hours/days homeless shelter is available per year (night time and day time, cold weather, non-cold weather) and % increase
- # of partnerships involved in homeless sheltering in Kittitas County and % increase
- # of individuals unsheltered during PIT count, % decrease
- # of beds available for homeless sheltering, % increase
- # individuals accessing other services through the shelter, % increase

Goal #3: Increase community awareness, education, and engagement around homelessness and housing issues in Kittitas County.

Community Strategies

- Conduct public forums about the root causes of homelessness
- Increase volunteer engagement in homelessness and housing programs
- Create community webpage about homelessness and housing issues, including resources

Measures

- # of events conducted
- # of volunteer hours, % increase

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Kittitas County Homelessness and Affordable Housing Committee (HAHC) respectfully submits this plan to the Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners for its approval and support. Through the work of the subcommittee, community partners, and community members, the HAHC believes following and supporting this plan will improve the issues of homelessness and affordable housing in Kittitas County. Together with community members, key collaborations, and county funding support, the HAHC is committed to making recommendations based on this plan, monitoring the plan's progress on an annual basis, and updating the plan annually.

Once the plan is finalized, a communication plan will be developed and implemented in order to share the plan with the community and community partners. A monitoring and implementation plan will also be developed as supplements to the document.

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