

COMMITTEE TO END HOMELESSNESS IN KING COUNTY (CEH) – STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2015-2019 INTEREST STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

The Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness comes to an end in 2015 and the Committee to End Homelessness in King County (CEH) is putting forward a new regional vision and strategic plan to guide the broad coalition of stakeholders for the next four years. The new vision for the CEH Strategic Plan for 2015-2019 is that homelessness is rare in King County, racial disparities are eliminated, and if one becomes homeless, it is brief and only a one-time occurrence. On July 1, 2015, CEH plans to launch its new four-year “A Regional, Aligned, Community Plan to End the Experience of Homelessness among Residents of Seattle/King County” to achieve this vision. The plan is a recommitment to the vision of ending homelessness, and outlines what needs to happen for this vision to become reality.

While many of the changes in the way services are provided for homeless are being mandated by the federal government, local funders such as King County, City of Seattle, City of Bellevue, and other jurisdictions, along with private funding partners such as United Way of King County, will need to continue to work together to align resources so they are most effective in meeting the needs of homeless individuals and families. As such, CEH is proposing to establish a Memorandum of Agreement among local government, philanthropy, and community partners to implement the Strategic Plan, aligning funding and committing to community-level outcomes. In addition, since the City’s non-profit partner agencies’ services are affected by these changes, the City needs to understand how services to Bellevue’s homeless residents will be different.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The City of Bellevue supports collaborative efforts that prevent individuals from becoming homeless and, for those that do experience homelessness, that it is a rare, brief, and one-time occurrence. This includes efforts to provide permanent housing with appropriate support services designed to assist the individual in becoming as self-sufficient as possible. Such efforts include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Continue to Support a Broad Continuum of Services.** A regional safety net of programs addressing the full spectrum of community needs must be maintained and enhanced. Homelessness is effectively prevented through continued investment in areas such as domestic violence advocacy, mental health and substance abuse treatment, early intervention with at-risk youth, employment counseling, and emergency financial assistance.
- **Align Existing Funding Resources.** Funds and programs within the current system should be aligned to support the strengths and address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. This includes addressing the crisis, finding housing as quickly as possible, and realigning housing and supports to meet the needs. If necessary, additional or new funding sources may then be sought to support practices that prove effective in further preventing homelessness or supporting those experiencing it.

- **Enhance Locally Available Services.** Individuals and families at risk of homelessness or who become homeless should be able to access either prevention support or permanent housing with support services that address the root causes of their housing crisis within the community in which they live. Funding originating from federal, state and county sources should be distributed equitably across all county sub-regions to support local responses to homelessness from public, private and non-profit organizations, including faith communities.
- **Recognize Homelessness as a Regional Issue.** All sub-regions should actively partner to improve the regional response to addressing those factors leading to homelessness that have county-wide impacts, e.g. need for more crisis response resources and affordable housing, access to appropriate health and mental health services, employment assistance, etc.
- **Acknowledge Differences in Sub-Regional Needs.** Each sub-region of the county should lead efforts to identify factors leading to homelessness that are particularly prevalent in that sub-region, e.g. cost of housing, insufficient shelter capacity to address demand, etc.
- **Acknowledge Differences in Sub-Regional Strategies to Address Homelessness.** As sub-regional needs differ, so will strategies to address those needs. County-wide initiatives and funding resources should accommodate sub-regional variation in the programmatic response to preventing and ending homelessness. For example, East King County has identified the need for permanent location(s) for winter shelters for homeless, along with day centers to provide access to hygiene and other services to provide a pathway to housing.
- **Coordinate efforts with other regional human services initiatives.** As homeless housing and support services are considered regional services, activities of the CEH Strategic Plan should be coordinated with other regional funding initiatives, e.g. King County Veterans and Human Services Levy, Mental Illness and Drug Dependency (MIDD) sales tax, etc. as they relate to the development of long-term stable funding for regional human services.
- **Establish Performance Measures and Uphold Accountability.** Performance measures should be designed to track the region's progress in making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time. These measures should be regularly reported to the community and be used to ensure accountability and positive outcomes within the service system.
- **Continue to Support Existing Conduits for Affordable Housing Production.** Confirm the role of A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH) as the primary conduit for the Eastside sub-region's response to issues of affordable housing production that relate to homelessness.