

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

General update and discussion on homelessness on the Eastside and Bellevue's response to homelessness.

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POLICY ISSUES

The City Council's vision includes a commitment to creating "a caring community where all residents enjoy a high quality of life." The vision also embodies the Council's recognition that at its core, the City of Bellevue is a city of neighborhoods, where our residents enjoy a wide variety of housing types, located in "a safe, sustainable and accessible community."

The City's Comprehensive Plan identifies strategies and goals that will allow the City to achieve and maintain this vision of Bellevue, even as the City grows and changes over time. Responding to a significant societal challenge like homelessness requires balancing a number of objectives, across a range of services, and at times presents problems not entirely within the City of Bellevue's ability to control. Specifically considering the City's response to homelessness, activities need to balance a number of policies and objectives, including:

Policies regarding housing and human services:

- HO-35: Support regional efforts to prevent homelessness, and make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time when it occurs. Provide a range of affordable housing options and support efforts to move homeless persons and families to long-term financial independence.
- HO-36: Collaborate with other jurisdictions and social service organizations to assure availability of emergency shelter and day centers that address homelessness.
- HS-14: Support agencies locating human service facilities in Bellevue and, where appropriate, encourage efficiencies through agency collocation and collaboration.
- HS-18: Support an intentional local community response to homelessness with housing and supportive services provided to families, youth and single adults.

Policies addressing quality of life and neighborhoods, including:

- N-2: Ensure police, fire and emergency services provide high levels of public safety that respond to growth and changing community needs.

- N-3: Equip residents, businesses and community service providers through education and training to be active participants in public safety (including, but not limited to, emergency preparedness, crime prevention, first aid, and fire prevention).

The City has also undertaken a number of specific studies and developed implementation plans to reduce the chances of an individual or family becoming homeless, including a long term commitment to preserving and maintaining affordable housing (through ARCH and through the recent Affordable Housing Strategic Plan), participation in regional efforts to end homelessness (through the 10-year plan to end homelessness and now All Home), and continued work on a variety of fronts to provide for prevention of and treatment for underlying conditions that can make it more likely that an individual or family will face homelessness. All of these efforts, and others at the federal, state and regional level, are needed to prevent and address homelessness. Tonight's presentation will focus specifically on current trends in homelessness in Bellevue and on the Eastside and describe the continuum of response efforts specifically around homeless individuals and families.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

ACTION



DIRECTION



INFORMATION ONLY



This update is for information only to provide context and framework for future discussions through the remainder of the year regarding specific actions related to homelessness.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

As the City of Bellevue has grown in size and transitioned into a more urban environment, homelessness has become a more visible issue. Factors such as lack of affordable housing, major economic declines such as the recent recession, low-paying jobs, domestic violence, chronic health conditions, youth aging out of the foster care system, substance abuse disorder and mental health issues are primary root causes of homelessness.

A coordinated effort:

In partnership with other Eastside jurisdictions, and as part of county-wide efforts to coordinate responses, Bellevue has been actively responding to homelessness for decades. The strategies and tactics are designed to be both compassionate and pragmatic. A complex net of programs and services attempt to prevent people from becoming homeless, divert them to other programs so homelessness is brief and one-time, provide subsidized housing, work with community partnerships on rotating shelters, and other supportive services. The goal is to prevent homelessness if possible, and when it does occur, to transition individuals back into stable housing as soon as possible. Services are provided by various government agencies, non-profit service providers, medical professionals, faith communities and law enforcement.

The cities of Bellevue, Kirkland, and Redmond have formed a collaborative approach to providing facilities for people experiencing homelessness. There are two models for shelter currently used on the Eastside to address homelessness: permanent and temporary winter shelter. Temporary winter shelters usually operate between October and mid-April or May and are located in faith community facilities for up to 3 months.

Currently, The Sophia Way operates a permanent shelter in Bellevue for up to 21 women experiencing homelessness, and Friends of Youth operates one for about 25 youth and young adults aged 18-24 years old in Redmond. The City of Kirkland is working with a church in Kirkland to develop a permanent shelter for families, although the opening date for this shelter has not yet been announced.

Catholic Community Services opened a winter shelter for families at Redmond United Methodist Church on September 30. The Sophia Way will provide a winter shelter for single women beginning on October 15 in Kirkland. Both of these shelters will move to temporary winter Bellevue locations (local church buildings) in early 2018. Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland and Medina faith communities have been hosting the original Congregations for the Homeless (CFH) rotating shelter since 1993; each of these faith communities host this rotating shelter for one month for up to 30 men.

In 2008, Bellevue began partnering with CFH to operate a temporary winter shelter for men after the tragic death of a man experiencing homelessness who was living outside in the City in severe weather. That temporary program has relocated, evolved and expanded to serve the greater need evidenced in the community. This temporary shelter has been operated at several locations throughout Bellevue, most recently in the Lincoln Center on 116th Avenue NE. The winter shelter is expected to operate at this location on an interim basis, until a permanent location is found.

Balanced approach:

The City of Bellevue is committed to creating a community in which every member has the ability to meet their basic physical, economic, and social needs, and the opportunity to enhance their quality of life.

HOMELESSNESS ON THE EASTSIDE

The unfortunate reality is that as homelessness grows, more people are living in their cars, in tents, or in unpermitted encampments in wooded areas throughout the Eastside. People living unsheltered has increased on the Eastside consistently over time. In 2010, 141 individuals were recorded sleeping unsheltered during the annual One Night Count. In the most recent 2017 count, the recorded number increased to 284 (up from 245 in 2016). However, it must be noted that the methodology for how the count is performed changed in 2017 to include all census tracts rather than several defined geographies in each city in King County. While the numbers are not comparable this year to prior years, the new methodology will be utilized going forward.

During the winter of 2015-2016 the CFH temporary winter men's shelter served 571 individuals. Similar increases in homelessness have been seen in other populations, such as families, single women, and youth and young adults.

One exception to this trend occurred during the most recent 2016-2017 winter for the CFH winter shelter, which served 429 individuals, a 24 percent decrease. This could be a result of decreased sleeping space at the new location at Lincoln Center, which will be remedied for the 2017-2018 winter with the extensive remodeling currently underway.

The City is committed to the health and safety of the entire community and has been monitoring a few key metrics typically used to gauge homelessness trends, as shown in the 2017 Homelessness Update

(attachment A). Data from the local non-profit agencies who operate the winter shelters across the Eastside show the following trends:

	<u>2015-16</u>	<u>2017 (Through June)</u>
Men's Shelter	571	429
Women's Shelter	86	192
Family Shelter	187	319

Also noted in the 2017 Homelessness Update is:

- Vehicle residency counts: 30 in 2015, 50 in 2016, and a one night count in July 2017 at 38
 - CFH outreach contacted 42 individuals
- Unauthorized camping: 7 trespass notices given, 24 site cleanups
 - CFH outreach to 83 individuals
- Panhandling: 52 calls in 2016, 35 from January through June 2017
 - CFH outreach contacted 48 individuals

INCREASING NEEDS, INCREASING GAPS

As the City observes more individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the community, and as Council continues the dialog on how to address homelessness, additional resources may be necessary. A multi-departmental team is working to identify these gaps and will return later in October with preliminary feedback and recommendations specifically around the items raised by Council to improve our provisions related to camping on public property and parking enforcement. A longer-term view of resource needs to continue to meet the needs of the community across the entire continuum of response, including support services, is part of the Human Services needs assessment and the City's biennial budget process.

LOOKING AHEAD

As homelessness is a complex and multifaceted issue, there are several elements coming before Council in the coming months and into the year ahead.

October 16, 2017	Legislative action prohibiting safe injection sites citywide
October 23, 2017	RV/car camping Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) Resource and funding gap discussion
November 6, 2017	Legislative action regarding RV/car camping (Pending Council direction received October 23, 2017)
November-Jan 2018	Series of discussions regarding citywide shelter LUCA
February 8, 2018	Interim Official Control for citywide shelter LUCA expires; can be extended or replaced with permanent regulations

OPTIONS

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

A. 2017 Homeless Update

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL DOCUMENT LIBRARY

N/A