

## Acknowledgments

Skagit County thanks the many individuals, organizations and groups who participated in the creation of the 2025 Homeless Housing Plan. Without their expertise and contributions to the work in developing this plan we would have been lacking critical insight into the needs of Skagit County. A full description of task force committee member requirements can be found in Appendix 1, page 18.

### Task Force Members:

Ariell Wright	Heidi Roy	Linda Crothers
Beatriz Ortiz De La Rose Perez	John Coleman	Madeleine Anthony
Brad Johnson	Jonathan Kline	Megan Starr
Charlie Bush	Jose Ortiz	Sarah Vogt
Dustin Johnson	Kat Lohman	Sandi Phinney
Genevieve Ward	Kaylynne Nyberg	Shelley Kjos
George Kosovich	Leon John	Steve Sexton

***We also must acknowledge all the individuals and families who contributed to this plan by sharing their experiences with housing instability in Skagit County.***

Quotes included in this plan may be from people with lived experience or staff of local programs providing housing and homeless services.

## Introduction

Washington state law [RCW 43.185C.050](#) requires that jurisdictions complete 5 year homeless housing plans which are guided by a local homeless housing task force. The local plans must be adopted by local government authority. Plans must support the shared vision that everyone experiencing homelessness and housing instability has swift and equitable access to stable housing that meets their needs.

Skagit County Public Health has published a Notice of Plan Development throughout 2025 on the <https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/HumanServices/HousingMain.htm> to seek continuous opportunity for community engagement. The draft of the plan was available for the month of October.

## Work Plan

Skagit County Public Health is the designated lead for this report and began working on the plan in 2024. The information presented in the coming report is a collective summary of the input from various stakeholders throughout the County from over a year of engagement. Starting in 2024,

Skagit County Public Health began engaging with the North Star Initiative, the North Star Housing Task Force, and other stakeholders to begin a widespread cross-county effort to develop the 2025-2030 Local Homeless Housing Plan. Public Health staff met with City and County leaders, local governments, service providers, various groups of community members, and people currently experiencing homelessness. Skagit County Public Health has published a Notice of Plan Development throughout 2025 on the County Homeless Housing Webpage: <https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/HumanServices/HousingMain.htm> to seek continuous opportunity for community engagement. The draft of the plan was available for the month of October and also distributed to local homeless service providers and participants, local newspapers, and social media outlets to further seek lived experience input on the final draft. A Public Hearing to receive comments or questions was held on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025 the plan shall be adopted by Skagit County Board of Commissioners by the end of December, 2025.

The 2025 work plan timeline is as follows:



The goals and priorities outlined in this report have been shaped by the voice of our stakeholders and community members over a year of engagement through multiple strategies. A full list of housing task force meetings can be found in Appendix II on pg. 19 and a detailed report on the public engagement can be found in Appendix III on pg. 20. Record of all public comments are shared in Appendix IV on pg. 24.

## Purpose

The purpose of Skagit County's Homeless Housing Plan is to make clear the actions of the homeless crisis response system over the next five years. The following pages detail the current system, how the system will change between now and 2030, identify strategies that work towards achieving objectives, and describe areas of opportunity. The plan also notes the additional resources and conditions required to house everyone experiencing homelessness. Skagit County hopes this plan offers a framework to take more urgent action to crisis of homelessness, build empathy with our community members, and bring awareness of the complex crisis that continues to worsen. Priorities in this plan serve as a blueprint for funding decisions and strategic initiatives over the next 5 years.

The Homeless Housing Plan is intended to complement the work of other housing action plans, such as those of the County, cities and towns, North Star, Skagit County's Strategic Plan, Skagit Council of Governments, Skagit County HOME Consortium, and Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan.

## Review of 2019-2024 plan and progress

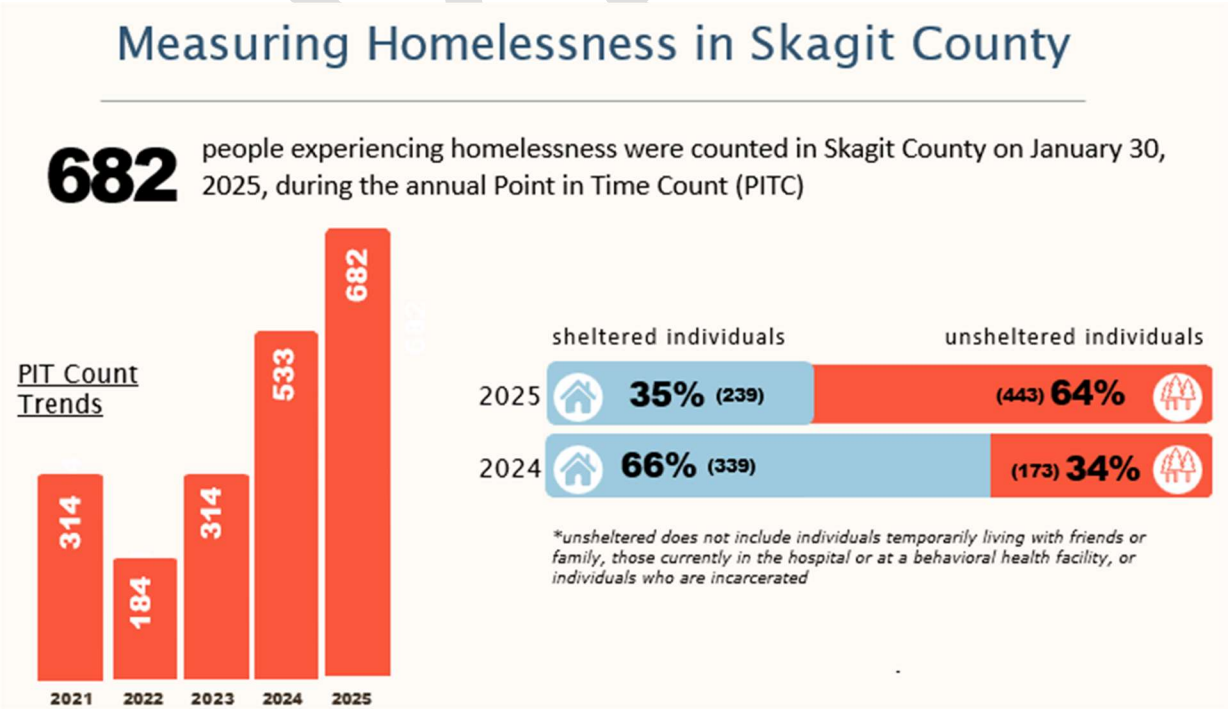
Objective 1	<b>Quickly identify and engage all people experiencing homelessness and all unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness through outreach and coordination between every system that encounters people experiencing homelessness</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Improved coordinated entry</li> <li>-Selected a new provider with increased capability for access</li> <li>-Increased funding for coordinated entry</li> <li>-Increased number of access points</li> <li>-Increased street outreach programs</li> <li>-Youth coordinated entry has been established</li> <li>-Skagit County ACI funding and collaboration with youth providing agencies</li> <li>-Year-round 90-day emergency shelter</li> <li>- Year-round Day Shelter open in 2023</li> <li>-Increased outreach in East County by CASC, MBPC, and Helping Hands</li> </ul>
Objective 2	<b>Prioritize people with the greatest need.</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Workgroup developed a new assessment tool over the course of 3 years working intensely on improvements to improve the tool (2022-2025)</li> <li>- Street outreach teams have shared confidentiality agreement and biweekly care coordination</li> <li>-Case conference with PSH and VOA Coordinated Entry leads happen biweekly</li> <li>-Implemented Julota- care coordination software tool for highest utilizers of Skagit County emergency services</li> <li>-Improved transportation and access to homeless people in East County through MBPC and Didgwalic</li> </ul>
Objective 3	<b>Operate an effective and efficient homeless crisis response system that swiftly moves people into stable permanent housing</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-New permanent supportive housing with 72 units of housing opened in 2023. Housing chronically homeless and disabled adults.</li> <li>-increased winter shelter programs</li> <li>-stable severe weather shelter in east county to provide shelter beds during severe weather, consistently offered for each year over this previous plan period</li> </ul>
Objective 4	<b>Project the impact of the fully implemented local plan using the modeling tool developed by Commerce</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The County continues to work closely with Dept.of Commerce in utilizing the new modeling and data analysis tools made available</li> </ul>
Objective 5	<b>Address racial disparities among people experiencing homelessness:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased funding for Skagit Legal Aid to support immigrant and farmworker communities</li> </ul>

	-Increased outreach teams with cultural diversity, language capabilities, and staff with people who have lived experience.
--	--

### Current Scope of homelessness and housing needs in Skagit County:

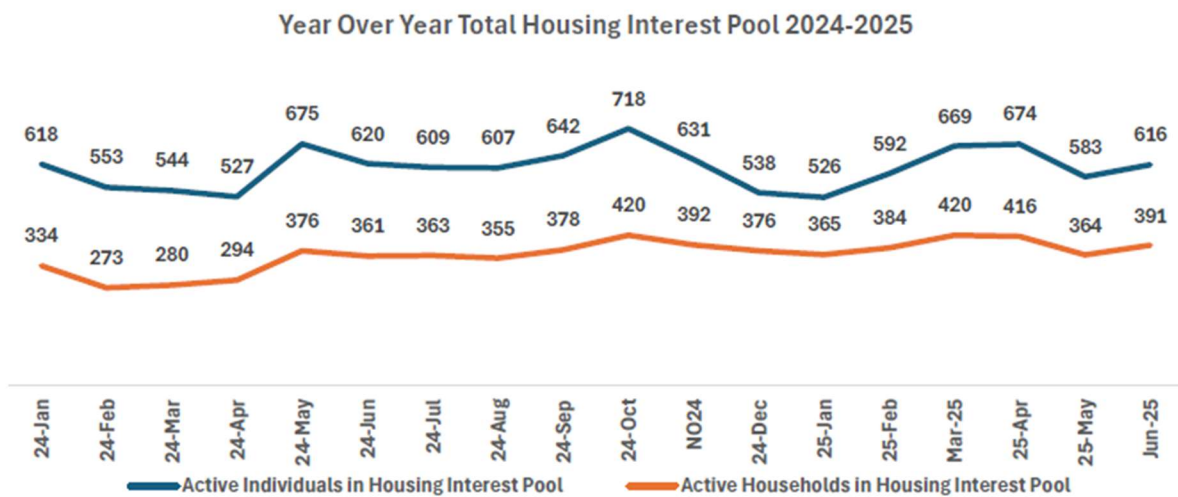
Skagit County, as with most other urban areas of the nation, continues to experience increases in housing instability and homelessness. As a rural County, the urban problems we face are increasingly difficult to navigate. We have seen the number of rent burdened households, and the number of homeless households increase despite efforts to increase outreach and resources. More than 52% of all households pay more than they can afford for their housing. <sup>1</sup> According to 2025 Point in Time Count data, there were at least 682 homeless individuals counted, with 239 in a shelter program and 443 were living outside. These numbers of people counted living outside more than doubled from 2024 to 2025. It is important to take note that more than 79% of unsheltered respondents reported their last permanent address was in Skagit County.

We acknowledge that the Point in Time Count is an undercount and not a true representation of the full scope of the crisis we are experiencing. Skagit County has many people living in places not meant for habitation deep within the woods and rural areas that are not easily counted through the Point in Time Count.



<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey data for 2023 (B25070) accessed at [Skagitcountytrends.org](https://www.skagitcountytrends.org)

According to Skagit County's Coordinated Entry system, there are over 1,200 households consistently waiting on the Coordinated Entry housing interest list. The Coordinated Entry lead, Volunteers of America, reported in 2025 that for every 1 household who obtains permanent housing, 3 more households are moved into that housing interest list. The demand for affordable housing continues to exceed the available resources.



The chart above shows the people who were documented as homeless or imminently at risk of homelessness to receive services through Coordinated Entry. There are very likely more people in our community who simply do not know about or are not seeking – the limited available services. As of 2020 more than 6,000 households in Skagit County were spending more than half of their income on their housing costs. Housing costs continue to increase and far outpace the rate of pay.<sup>2</sup>

### Comprehensive Plan

The Housing Element of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan contains information describing the demographic and economic conditions pertaining to housing needs for the next 20 years. In particular, the Housing Element creates the planning foundation for housing by providing insight into existing trends in the community, including building permits, location of growth, and demographics. In addition, it highlights existing and anticipated housing needs that are present in Skagit County, such as rural densities, senior housing, farmworker housing, affordable housing, and others.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.skagitcounty.net/PlanningAndPermit/Documents/020625/SkagitCounty\\_HousingNeedsAssesment\\_FINAL0911.pdf](https://www.skagitcounty.net/PlanningAndPermit/Documents/020625/SkagitCounty_HousingNeedsAssesment_FINAL0911.pdf)

<sup>3</sup><https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/2025CPA.htm>

Skagit County's population is projected to reach 160,830 by 2045, with an average annual growth rate of 0.9% over the next two decades. About 80% of this growth is expected in incorporated cities and their UGAs. The average household size is 2.42. The growing number of elderly households highlights the need for housing policies supporting diverse options, such as accessory dwelling units for caregivers or family members and smaller housing units near services for those downsizing.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, the county is becoming more diverse: from 2017 to 2022, the percentage identifying as White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, decreased from 75% to 72%. As the County becomes more diverse, housing needs and associated supportive amenities and services may differ for different cultural groups and communities. The senior population is also expected to grow significantly, from 29,373 residents aged 65 and older in 2020 (23% of the population) to 45,022 by 2045 (28%). Housing is needed to fit each stage of life in terms of size, design, and affordability. Most of the population in Skagit County speak English only, but there has been an increase in those speaking Spanish since the year 2000 and a general decrease in the English only percentage.<sup>4</sup>

## Why does homelessness continue to increase?

The circumstances that lead people to become homeless are varied and frequently involve multiple, compounding factors. There are also significant external pressures outside of people's individual stories that drive homelessness. Skagit County lacks diverse housing options, especially affordable housing for low- to moderate-income families, and has experienced extremely low vacancy rates over the most recent decade. Living wages are not keeping up with the increased costs of housing. According to Gregg Colbern, the greatest influence on increasing homelessness is linked to vacancy rates (available housing) and the price of housing. The problem is rooted in larger systemic factors rather than the individual who is suffering from poverty, addiction, or disease.<sup>5</sup>

Statewide, Skagit has consistently had one of the tightest rental markets and rental vacancies are currently 3%, well below the state average of 5%. Despite, the addition of local housing units developed in recent years the housing stock is still insufficient to meet the needs. According to UW Runsteadt reports over the years, rental prices have consistently increased by an average of 21%. Working people simply cannot afford housing, which in turn causes a domino effect of negative impacts to the vital conditions which allow people to thrive. Negative ramifications result including stress, health issues, families break apart, substance use, struggle in school, evictions increase, employment stability, so many layers of issues compounding the rise in housing instability.

<sup>6</sup>(<https://wcrer.be.uw.edu/#:~:text=Apartment%20Market%20Report%202025.View/Download%20Full%20Report>)

---

<sup>4</sup> SkagitCounty\_HousingNeedsAssessment\_FINAL0911.pdf

<sup>5</sup> <https://homelessnesshousingproblem.com>

<sup>6</sup> <https://wcrer.be.uw.edu/#:~:text=Apartment%20Market%20Report%202025.View/Download%20Full%20Report>



## Current Roles and Responsibilities of the Homeless Crisis Response System

### North Star Initiative

North Star is a collaborative approach to address countywide housing, homelessness, and behavioral health challenges. North Star is a public-private partnership utilizing governments, housing, health providers, non-profits, and first responders to provide effective care and housing for neighbors experiencing chronic homelessness in Skagit County. Through North Star, Skagit County leaders continue to work together collaboratively to provide guidance to our County on ensuring policies, programs, and funding are integrated and coordinated. North Star is focused on building a pipeline of affordable housing through these key initiatives:

- Align timing and processes of city and county funding processes serving target populations, setting projects up for success with other competitive funding processes.
- Identify publicly owned parcels suitable for affordable housing; make recommendations to respective planning commissions and councils.
- Secure funding for technical real estate and due diligence consultants to expediting planning and property dispositions.
- Working with developers, advocates, and others to develop a pipeline of affordable housing projects and position them to compete for State resources.<sup>7</sup>

Homeless Crisis Response Services Committee: an appointed group of community stakeholders makes recommendations to the Skagit Board of County Commissioners to allocate homeless services funding and assures oversight over the community's homeless crisis response system.

Skagit County Public Health: The Public Health Department provides the staff capacity to contract and coordinate with homeless services grantees and community stakeholders, as well as plan new projects. The staff at Public Health issue Notices of Funding Availability when homeless service funds are allocated, conducts contract monitoring, conducts federal, state and county reporting, and fulfills other program requirements.

Cities and Towns: The cities and towns of Skagit County frequently deploy public services in response to challenges around homelessness, but they historically have received very limited homeless service funds. HB 1406, enacted in 2019, allows for local governments to retain a portion of sales tax within their jurisdictions to apply towards prevention of homelessness, and each city also enacted HB 1590, which provides additional local sales taxes they can use for homeless services. Anacortes and Mount Vernon also have access to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds that they can use for housing and homeless services.

Homeless service providers: Homeless service providers range in size and type around Skagit County. Most agencies provide emergency shelter, case management, temporary housing assistance, transitional living, outreach, permanent supportive housing assistance or some

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://northstarskagit.org>

combination of services. Many of these agencies apply for funds through Skagit County annually, but most employ a variety of other funding streams such as grants, individual donations or other contracts. There are also several agencies around the community that do not regularly apply or receive funds through Skagit County but nevertheless deliver vital services to people experiencing homelessness. These agencies would not be included in the Coordinated Entry system but are included as potential resources.

Coordinated Entry (CE) Volunteers of America (VOA) administers the CE in Skagit County by utilizing a call center. VOA became the CE lead early in 2024. CE is the system by which applicants are matched to services and entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Additional nonprofits also serve as access points into the coordinated entry system.

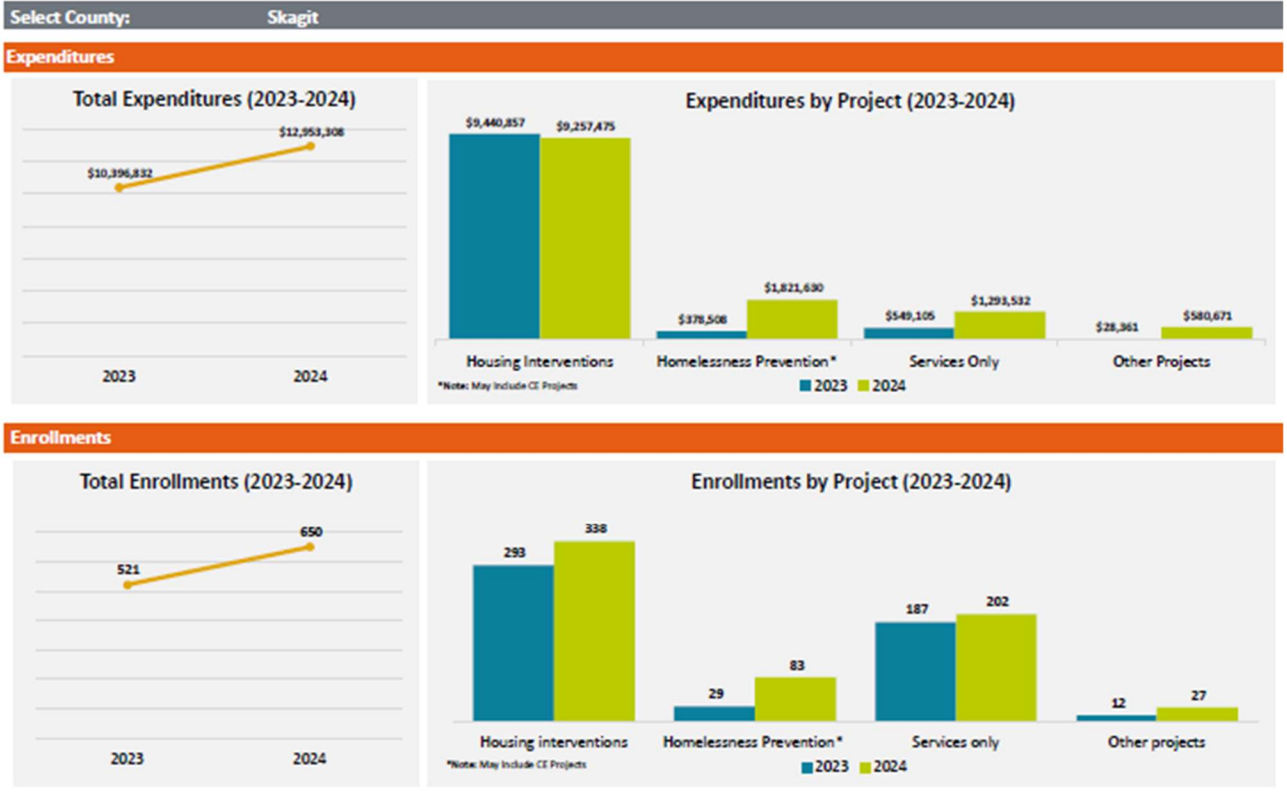
Over the plan years 2025-2030 we aim to continuously improve the CE system by decreasing barriers and increasing accessibility and community understanding of what the CE housing interest pool is. VOA will continue to build out a case conferencing model which we plan to have implemented and improved upon over the upcoming plan years. The goal of case conferencing is to further identify the most vulnerable people on the housing interest list and help identify the most appropriate resources for those people.

The prioritization assessment tool has been re-worked by a team of hardworking service providers and people with lived expertise. Deep analysis of the tool and its impact on the CE system and individual lives were considered and discussed for over 2 years as a new prioritization assessment tool was designed. The upcoming plan years 2025-2030 will be a phase of implementation, reflections, and continued review processes established.

## Estimate Service Levels

Review of this data illuminates some recent trends Skagit County has experienced and helps to project future needs. Overall, the data provided through this tool shows that the numbers of homeless and services needed continue to rise. Skagit County should prioritize increasing affordable housing for 0-50% AMI. Specifically, the County needs an estimated 4,474 more housing units for 0-30% AMI.



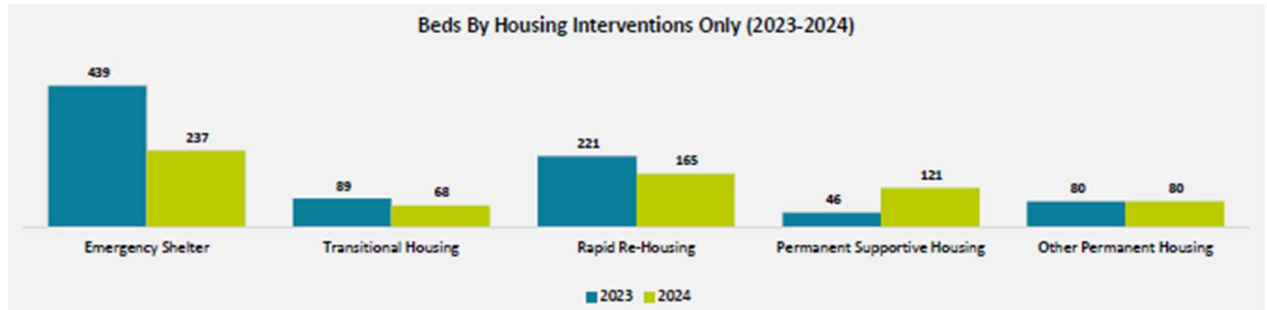
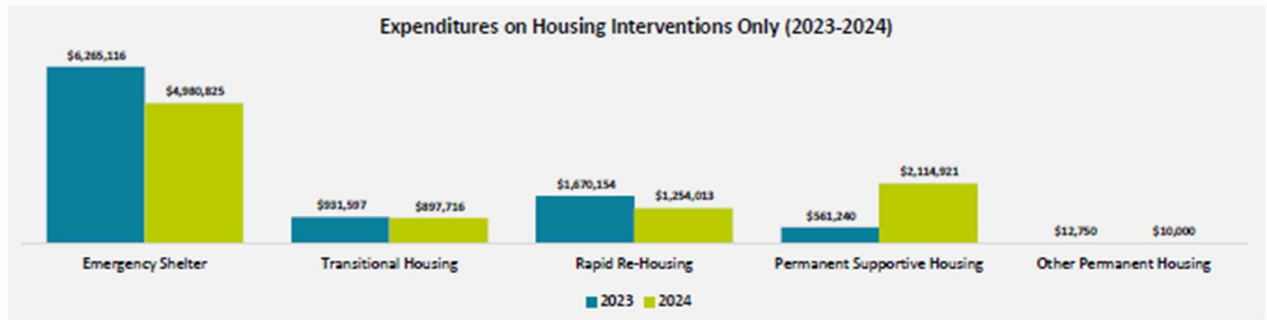


8

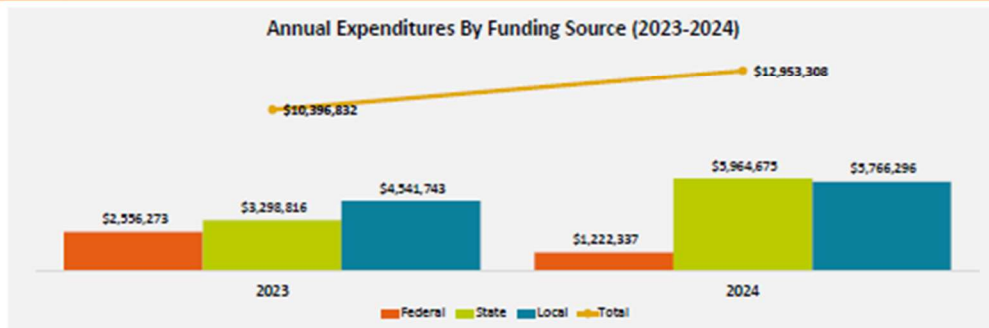
We see some trends through this data that reflect the available funds and priorities over the last few years including the increase of motels during the pandemic years which are no longer available in our County. We also notice the impact of the new Permanent Supportive Housing project, Martha's Place, that opened in 2023 in Skagit County and expect those PSH numbers to remain static for the coming years.

<sup>8</sup> <https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/ybf5p8potq3rgx2peyтуwqas1k7ckws/file/1815027817619>

## Housing Interventions



## Funding Breakdown



8

## Housing for All Planning (HAPT)

The lack of affordable units combined with the lack of adequate funding to provide appropriate case management, rental assistance or shelter to our community members who need it in Skagit County is a significant barrier to preventing and ending homelessness. While more capacity and funding is needed in every aspect of the housing homelessness system, there are a few key resources that would greatly increase the system's impact on housing more adults and youth in our community.

The Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) conducted analysis to forecast future countywide population and housing needs in the year 2045. This work is documented in the Skagit County Population, Housing and Employment Growth Allocations Methodology (2023) and adopted in SCOG Resolution 20023-01. It reports that the County, inclusive of all jurisdictions, will need to add 17,450 net new housing units between 2020 and 2045 to address all current and projected housing needs countywide. This breaks down to at least 3,490 more total units needed over the next 5

years. Of that, Skagit County needs at least 898 more units to meet the needs of the 0-30% AMI over the next 5 years.<sup>3</sup>

**Exhibit 1. Final Allocations of Net New Housing Needed (2020-2045)**

Final Allocations of Net New Housing Needed (2020-2045)								
Urban Growth Areas		0-30% AMI*	31-50% AMI	51-80% AMI	81-100% AMI	101- 120% AMI	Above 120% AMI	Total
Anacortes		943	604	422	226	201	546	2,942
Burlington		911	584	408	218	194	528	2,843
Mount Vernon		1,659	1,064	743	398	353	963	5,180
Sedro-Woolley		848	544	380	203	180	491	2,646
Concrete		35	22	15	8	7	20	107
Hamilton		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
La Conner		40	26	18	10	8	22	124
Lyman		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bayview Ridge		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Swinomish		38	24	17	9	8	22	118
	UGA Subtotal	4,474	2,868	2,003	1,072	951	2,592	13,960
Rural (outside of UGA's)		0	0	501	268	238	2,483	3,490
	Grand Total	4,474	2,868	2,504	1,340	1,189	5,075	17,450

**Notes:**

- 1.) Figures may vary from Skagit County Population, Housing and Employment Growth Allocations Methodology findings due to rounding.
- 2.) UGA is "Urban Growth Area"
- 3.) AMI is "Area Median Income"
- 4.) Emergency housing needs are documented in the Skagit County Population, Housing and Employment Growth Allocations Methodology.
- 5.) Allocations for the Swinomish Urban Growth Area provided for informational purposes only, Skagit County did not conduct a land capacity analysis for this UGA due to jurisdictional challenges on tribal lands.

The HAPT tool shows us that most new housing units will be needed in the City of Mount Vernon. Then also in the rural areas of Skagit County, and then Anacortes. The majority of housing units needed should meet the needs of homeless and extremely low-income households, 0%-50% AMI households.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>[https://www.scog.net/Growth\\_Management/2024/GrowthProjectionsAndAllocationsFinalReport-2024-04-29.pdf](https://www.scog.net/Growth_Management/2024/GrowthProjectionsAndAllocationsFinalReport-2024-04-29.pdf)

## Survey of Fund Sources

Skagit County has a number of funding sources to support the County's homeless crisis response system.

<b>Fund Name</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Allowable uses</b>	<b>Received SFY24</b>	<b>Actual/Projected Received SFY25</b>
Document Recording Fees	Local	Receiving/Collecting	Emergency Shelter, Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), rental assistance, case management, outreach, system admin, internal costs	\$566,770	\$424,450
CHG	State	Receiving/Collecting	Emergency Shelter, PSH, rental assistance, case management, outreach, prevention, system admin, internal costs	\$3,308,117	3,929,991
HEN	State	Receiving/Collecting	Temporary housing and essential need services for disabled households referred through DSHS	\$587,674	\$700,478
Housing and Related Services Sales and Use (1590)	Local	Receiving/Collecting	Up to 40% may be used for housing-related services, the remainder must be used for construction of affordable housing or behavioral health facilities	\$1,222,231	\$1,269,336
Affordable and Supportive Housing Sales and Use (1406)	Local	Receiving/Collecting	Allowable for rental assistance, affordable housing maintenance/development, affordable housing operations (for new units)	\$277,060	\$277,060
CDBG	Federal	Receiving/Collecting	Public Services	\$60,411	\$61,087
1/10 1%BH	Local	Receiving/Collecting	Must serve persons with behavioral health disabilities	\$500,000	\$500,000
HOME	Federal	Receiving/Collecting	Development of affordable housing	\$520,830	\$1,437,450
ACH	Private	Receiving/Collecting	Diversion and rental assistance	\$100,000	\$0.00

## Objectives

The plan for the next 5 years is comprised of 6 objectives which have been developed by Wasington State Department of Commerce as well as the Skagit County Homeless Housing Task Force. The strategies and performance measures have been guided by Task Force Member discussions as well as feedback and trends collected through community engagement.

### Objective 1: Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system

The Coordinated Entry system hosted through the state Homeless Management Information System matches clients to services based on their score and availability of program beds. The majority of homeless services in Skagit County are facilitated through Coordinated Entry, although there is some additional shelter offered individually through Friendship House and Family Promise as well as very limited motel vouchers offered sporadically.

When gathering feedback from community members with lived experience, 44% of survey respondents cited that they did not know how to request help with shelter or housing. There are some populations that have decreased access or knowledge of 211 including the far East County areas and the Latino, farmworkers who are often housing insecure but not qualified per the HUD definition. Community members in East County also consistently stated that while there is no shelter or housing resources in East County, many would rather stay unhoused in that rural area than migrate downriver into town where all the resources are located thus indicating the need to establish more resources in East County.

Objective 1: Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system	Timeline	Measure
Goal 1: Strengthen Coordinated Entry (CE) Housing Interest Pool		
Action		
Provide CE orientation to all systems that encounter people experiencing homelessness	ongoing (2026-2030)	At east 30 Coordinated entry intakes will be completed by partner agencies Annually
Develop multiple entry pathways to access CE (in-person, phone, online, outreach workers)		
Expand Client coordination of care meetings established between outreach agencies		
Goal 2: Effectively utilize community shelter resources		
Action		
Monitor and track shelter vacancies and capacity, identify underlying issues that may require attention and improvement.	ongoing (2026-2030)	Occupancy rate of shelter beds is an average of 90% or more.
Goal 3: Improve Data Collection and Use in Homeless Crisis Response System		
Action		
Improve training for staff on data entry standards	ongoing (2026-2030)	Overall data completeness of County funded programs is 95% or higher or has improved over the the last SFY
		Overall data timeliness of County funded programs is within threee days of program exit/entry or has improved over the last SFY
Goal 3: Expand Outreach and Engagement		
Action		
Conduct regular outreach to connect youth and adults to homeless and housing services	2028	Increase in youth enrollments in CE and supportive services by 50%
Develop outreach plans for rural, youth and Latino populations	2027	Plan completed and shared with outreach providers.

## Objective 2: Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce

Skagit County Public Health engaged the workforce in this process in a variety of ways. There was a survey for direct service workers and a separate survey for management and leadership roles. We also engaged with service providers in planning discussions and at task force meetings.

### 24 leadership positions submitted survey responses.

- 58% report difficulty retaining staff
- 87% believe if they offered higher wages, they could retain more staff
- 70% feel their rate of pay and benefits are not competitive

*"The majority of our frontline staff are not more than a paycheck away from instability themselves."*

### 29 direct service providers submitted survey responses.

- Staff overwhelmingly agree they would like higher wages and better health insurance
- 48% of workers feel their workload is manageable
- The biggest concerns in Skagit identified by workers include not enough shelter beds, lack of affordable housing, not enough money/resources, and concerns with funding cuts

*"I would also love to see organizations collaborate more together across the community to deliver learning and training content; we are often all tasked with the same kinds of trainings per contracts, and it would be a whole lot easier to coordinate as a system than as individual organizations duplicating the same efforts."*

Objective 2: Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce	Timeline	Measure
<b>Goal 1: Strengthen Workforce Recruitment and Retention in Homeless Services</b>		
<b>Action</b>		
Make retention bonuses an explicitly allowable use in contracts.	January, 2026	Retention bonus language adopted in contracts by 2026.
Support statewide reinstatement of Service Worker Stipend Program.	May, 2026	20% of contracted providers include retention bonuses in program budgets
	ongoing (2026-2030)	Homeless Service provides stipends available across the state
<b>Goal 3: Improve Contracting and Funding Stability</b>		
<b>Action</b>		
Extend contract cycles	January, 2027	Recommendation on two-year contracts developed and adopted
<b>Goal 2: Strengthen Training and Professional Development Opportunities</b>		
<b>Action</b>		
Create a Countywide training calendar for homeless service providers	Jul-26	Percentage of providers reporting increased knowledge, skills, or confidence after technical assistance (via surveys).
Provide localized ongoing technical assistance to service providers	ongoing (2026-2030)	



### Objective 3: Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible.

Objective 3: Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible.	Timeline	Measure
Goal 1: Enhance Prevention and Diversion System Navigation and Case Management		
Action		
CHG Eviction Prevention Program	ongoing (2026-2030)	95% of households retain housing within 6 months of receiving assistance
County Funded Diversion Programs	ongoing (2026-2030)	At least 60% of contracted funds will be utilized in providing direct financial support to individuals.
Assess whether increased coordination of Diversion referrals is needed	2026	Diversion Program assessment completed
Goal 2: Strengthen a Community-Based System of Care		
Action		
Prioritize funding for programs that deliver comprehensive, integrated assistance in alignment with the North Star guiding principles	ongoing (2026-2030)	80% of County funded programs are highly integrated
Goal 4: Expand Language Access		
Action		
Include language access requirements in the 2026 Homeless Housing Crisis NOFA.	January, 2027	All county funded programs have clearly defined language access plans

### Objective 4: Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm.

All stakeholder groups ranked the top 3 highest need populations as families with children, youth and young adults, seniors and disabled. Service providers made it clear through reoccurring comments that there is high concern for youth homelessness as well as a growing senior population with many elders and people with disabilities experiencing homelessness. These groups are highly vulnerable.

*"We need open access, low barrier emergency shelters that are not referral based- we have none that are open year-round. We desperately need transitional housing for folks living with severe mental illness and substance use disorders where there are clinical supervising staff 24/7- Basically a Behavioral Health home. We need more recovery housing and places that accept Emotional Support Animals and Service Animals readily without discrimination."*

Objective 4: Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm	Timeline	Measure
<b>Goal 1: Improve Use of Assessment Tools to Inform Care</b>		
<b>Action</b>		
Conduct annual assesment of SHIPA tool	Annually	SHIPA assessments completed annually, reccomendations/changes implemented within 3 months of assesment.
Monitor and track Average vulnerability score of placements from the Housing Interest Pool	ongoing (2026-2030)	90% or more of Households in the top range of vulnerability receive placement
<b>Goal 2: Ensure racial equity within homeless service system program access</b>		
<b>Action</b>		
Monitor and track the Commerce equity dashboard.	ongoing (2026-2030)	Housing outcomes of exited households are consistent across racial and ethnic demographics.
<b>Goal 3: Strengthen Data and Coordination Infrastructure</b>		
<b>Action</b>		
Expand use of shared community-based platform to improve coordination, alignment and case management between homeless housing and medical/behavioral health systems	ongoing (2026-2030)	10% annual increase in community programs utilizing the integrated system.

## Objective 5: Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

*"If we want to ensure people are focused on housing solutions, we need to have an infrastructure that builds towards that."*

*"We need open access, low barrier emergency shelters that are not referral based- we have none that are open year-round. We desperately need transitional housing for folks living with severe mental illness and substance use disorders where there are clinical supervising staff 24/7- Basically a Behavioral Health home. We need more recovery housing."*

*"We need high density housing that is not means tested, tiny homes would be really cool, similar to Seattle and homes now. Marblemount and east county have a lot of people so many people live in unsanitary housing, people in the woods and we need housing development in east county. It would greatly improve the quality of life. east of concrete it is even more economically devastated. I think anywhere west of the cascades, eastern Skagit has the most economic devastation, people are hurting the most here. I-5 corridor communities have some wafts of economic stimulus but not east out here."*

Objective 5: Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs	Timeline	Measure
Goal 1: Expand Year-Round Emergency Shelter Options		
Action		
Conduct feasibility study and identify partner agency	2026-2029	Year-round emergency shelter project identified
Secure site and funding for year-round shelter		Funding identified and secured
Identify and establish a year-round emergency shelter with drop-in beds.	2030	Increase in number of night-by-night beds available annually.
Goal 2: Enhance connections between shelters and mental health services		
Action		
Expand program capacity to safely house people experiencing unmet behavioral health needs.	2030	12 additional beds of crisis stabilization, supportive housing, shelter, or other programs that support people's behavioral health recovery.
Goal 3: Maintain a range of housing services to ensure that all subpopulations have a path to housing stability		
Action		
Rapid Rehousing	ongoing (2026-2030)	80% of exiting households exit to permanent housing
Transitional Housing		80% of exiting households exit to permanent housing
Permanent Supportive Housing		90% of people on PSH remain in PSH or exiting households exit to permanent
Emergency Shelter		50% of exiting households exit to permanent housing 50%
Goal 4: Support Community Housing Partnerships		
Action		
Support innovative partnerships between faith-based, non-profit and other community based efforts to add shelter and housing, including tiny home shelters, cottages, etc.	ongoing (2026-2030)	Number of cottages, pallet shelters, and other units developed. Number of households served annually through faith-based/community project
Goal 5: Build a Pipeline of Affordable Housing		
Action		
Implement North Star Housing Call to Action in Skagit County*	ongoing (2026-2030)	Policy changes adopted Number of affordable housing units permitted annually. Increase in affordable units built in transit-served corridors.
<b>*NorthStar Call to Action:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Allow mixed-use development outright in commercially zoned, transit-served corridors.</li><li>✓ Relax or eliminate density limits in such areas.</li><li>✓ Adopt by-right permitting in residential zones.</li><li>✓ Reduce parking requirements for affordable housing projects.</li><li>✓ Reduce fees for affordable housing projects.</li></ul>		

## Objective 6: Eliminate unaccompanied youth and young adult homelessness

Skagit County consistently has over 50 youth or young adults on the YYA by name list. Our County offers youth shelter at the Oasis, YMCA for youth under 18 years of age. For young adults aged 18-25, Northwest Youth Services offers shelter and housing programs. During recent years the YMCA has expanded a new youth drop-in rec center in Sedro Woolley which allows for safe spaces and opportunities to connect with other youth and staff building health relationships.



*“18-24-year-olds. This is a crucial time for them to find housing before they become street dependent. They are at a high risk of being trafficked and with that comes substance use, arrests, gang affiliation etc. Youth shelters exit on their 18th birthday. Some still in high school. They have to quit to survive. They do not have credit or income to get an apartment. ”*

Objective 6: Eliminate unaccompanied youth and young adult homelessness	Timeline	Measure
Goal 1: Increase Affordable Housing for Youth and Young Adults (YYA)		
Action		
Support Launch of HOST HOMES program	ongoing (2026-2030)	At least 10 youth served in Host Homels Annually
Increase utilization rates at NWYS and YMCA Oasis housing programs		Occupancy rate of shelter beds and transitional units is an average of 90% or more.
Expand mobile and peer-led outreach strategies targeting YYA experiencing homelessness.		Increase in number of YYA engaged through outreach annually
Goal 2: Achieve functional zero on youth and young adult homelessness for ages 12-24		
Action		
Support the development and maintenance of a monthly By-Name List for homeless youth 12-24	ongoing (2026-2030)	Stable housing secured for YYA in 30 days or less
Develop and deliver training for all providers on best practices for engaging YYA.		100% of Service providers receive training annually
Establish YYA-specific case conferencing meetings across agencies.		At least 2 YYA case conferences held monthly

## Conclusion

Reflecting on the previous 5-year plan, it is clear our County and Cities achieved many components of our housing system. Services have expanded and more shelter and housing is available today because of the commitment our leadership and providers have to expanding care and services to our most vulnerable communities. As with many regions across the nation, Skagit County continues to experience rising cost of living and housing and incomes that are not keeping

up pace. Homelessness continues to increase, housing continues to be out of reach for many in our community.

With over a year of community engagement and listening to our community members through a variety of planning processes, we continue to see the reoccurring trends that Skagit County community members want more affordable housing now. We must dedicate the coming years to exploring more alternative housing solutions. Long-term and short-term options should be explored. As we look at the next 5 years, it remains consistent that the community members and stakeholders ask us to continue prioritizing the development of affordable housing and increasing housing diversity.

## Appendix I: List of all Housing Task Force Participant Requirements

<b><u>Agency Representation</u></b>	<b><u>Task Force Requirement</u></b>
Anacortes Family Center	emergency shelter operator non-profit organization with experience in low-income housing
Catholic Community Services	permanent supportive housing operator
Catholic Housing Services	permanent supportive housing provider
City of Anacortes	2 <sup>nd</sup> largest city
City of Burlington	small city
City of Mount Vernon	largest city
City of Sedro Woolley	small city
Community Action of Skagit County	non-profit organization with experience in low-income housing emergency shelter operator street outreach rental subsidy administrators
Didgwallic, community wellness center	
Mount Baker Presbyterian Church	formerly homeless person rural homeless outreach
Northsound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization	behavioral health administrative service organization
Skagit County Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services	domestic violence and sexual assault services emergency shelter operator
Skagit Friendship House	emergency shelter operator
Skagit Valley YMCA	youth shelter operator youth outreach
Volunteers of America	coordinated entry formerly homeless person
Welcome Home Skagit	by and for organization emergency shelter operator formerly homeless person

## Appendix II: List of all Housing Task Force Planning Meetings

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Attended</b>	<b>Invited but not Attended</b>
4/21/2025	Housing Task Force 1	Ariell Wright, CCS	Brad Johnson, Burlington
		Genevieve Ward, MBPC	Charlie Bush, Sedro-Woolley
		Dustin Johnson, AFC	Jose Ortiz, CCS
		Beatriz De La Rose Perez, AFC	Kaylynne Nyberg, VOA
		Heidi Roy, SDVSAS	Sarah Vogt, WHS
		Jonathan Kline, Friendship House	Melanie Corey, HASC
		John Coleman, Anacortes	Margaret Rojas, NSBHASO
		Kat Lohman, YMCA	
		Mary Meyers, MBPC	
		Steve Sexton, Mount Vernon	
		Sandi Phinney, CASC	
		Madeleine Anthony, SCPH	
		Megan Starr, SCPH	
		Shelley Kjos, SCPH	
		George Kosovish, SCPH	
8/27/25	Housing Task Force 2	Ariell Wright, CCS	Genevieve Ward, MBPC
		Heidi Roy, SDVSAS	Dustin Johnson, AFC
		Jonathan Kline, Friendship House	Melanie Corey, HASC
		John Coleman, Anacortes	
		Kat Lohman, YMCA	
		Linda Crothers, NSBHASO	
		Brad Johnson, Burlington	
		Charlie Bush, Sedro-Woolley	
		Jose Ortiz, CCS	
		Kaylynne Nyberg, VOA	
		Steve Sexton, Mount Vernon	
		Sandi Phinney, CASC	
		Madeleine Anthony, SCPH	
		Megan Starr, SCPH	
		Shelley Kjos, SCPH	
		George Kosovish, SCPH	



## Appendix III: Summary of Community Feedback

### Public Engagement:

Skagit County Public Health conducted 3 different surveys to gather stakeholder feedback:

1. homeless service providers survey
2. homeless service provider leadership survey
3. people with lived experience survey

Staff conducted targeted outreach approach to obtaining input from people with lived experience of homelessness or housing instability and obtained a total of 100 participants' input. Following the WA. State Dept. of Commerce compensation recommendations, participants were paid \$25 for their time completing surveys after confirming their lived experience and low-income status. Surveys were available in multiple languages and offered with the option to complete independently on paper or computer, or verbally with Public Health Staff. Outreach was conducted in the various regions of the County with attempts to engage various household types. Staff went to Anacortes Family Center, First Steps Adult Shelter in Burlington, Welcome Home Skagit Adult day shelter in Mount Vernon, Sedro Woolley Food Bank, Farmworkers Center in Mount Vernon, Concrete Community Center free lunch, Marblemount rural pop up event/foodbank, and also conducted surveys with the resident advisory board at Martha's Place Permanent Supportive Housing project in Mount Vernon.

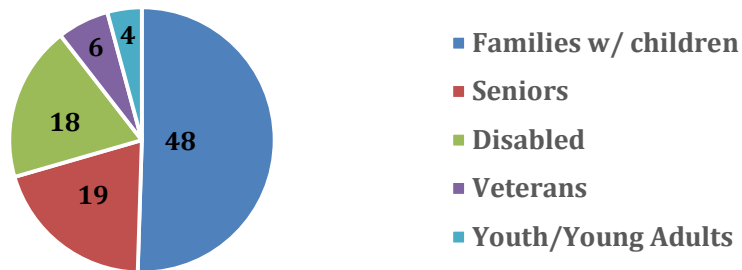
The data analysis and trends are interwoven throughout the objectives and strategies and were examined by the Skagit Homeless Housing Task Force in the development of our counties' priorities in the coming years. A summary of each survey results are listed below.

<b>People With Lived Experience, 100 responses</b>	
<b>Language</b>	<b>Age Category</b>
18 Spanish	77 Adults
1 French	11 Elders (62 years +)
81 English	12 (Young Adults 18-25+)

### *"I feel ashamed and unworthy."*

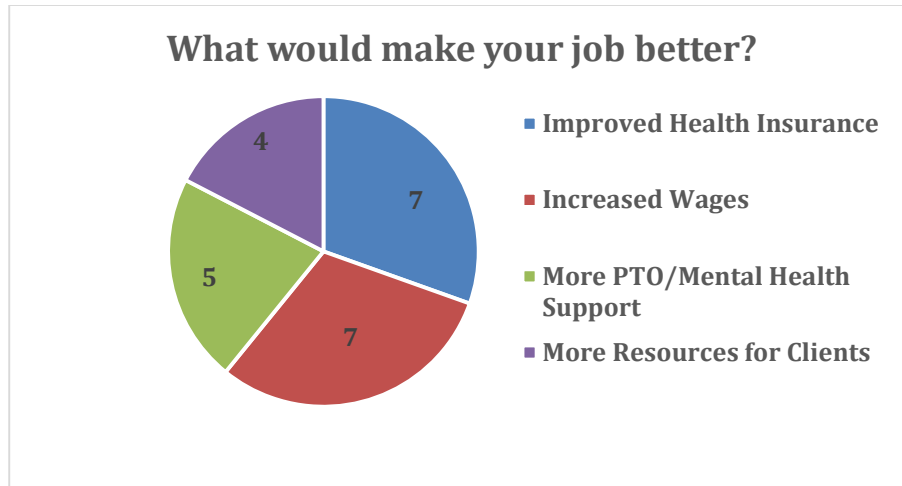
- 44% of respondents did not know who to contact, or where to get when they were experiencing their need to housing resources
- 27 reoccurring comments related to the general lack of resources and larger systemic problems, not enough shelter beds, not enough affordable housing.
- 15 reoccurring comments related to the positive engagement with support staff at various programs.
- More affordable housing, more shelter beds, and more tiny home/creative housing solutions are needed.

### Who should be prioritized for help?



#### Service Provider Survey Results, 29 responses

- 48% have worked in this field for 1-3 years and 28% 4-6 years
- 44% of staff have experienced their own housing instability with 28% having experienced literal homelessness
- The primary reason people would leave their job is if funding was reduced or they find a higher paying job in the same field
- 26 total respondents ranked their satisfaction with their current job 4 or 5 (highly satisfied).
- All but 1 respondent stated their workload is manageable “always” or “sometimes”, only 1 respondent stated it was “rarely” manageable.
- The greatest challenges identified are not having enough resources, funding, and shelter beds. The second greatest challenge is not enough money, funding cuts, and the wages offered to frontline direct service providers.
- Service providers felt the demographics that should be prioritized for housing resources are families with children, youth and young adults, and seniors and disabled people.
- The greatest need in our community is the need for more affordable housing.



*"Whenever we discuss system challenges, the answer(s) seemingly always comes down to funding/lack of funding/inadequate funding."*

#### **Leadership Survey Results, 24 responses**

*"No one should have to be homeless. ALL homelessness or potential loss of housing stability should be prioritized with the utmost urgency!"*

- 58% stated management has had trouble keeping frontline staff over the last year.
- 50% stated the main cause: Burnout or Stress
- What has helped to keep staff includes: retention bonuses, increasing pay, flexible schedules, self-care, retreats
- 87% of leadership feels that they could keep staff if they were able to offer higher wages.
- 70% of leadership responses thought their pay and benefits are uncompetitive or somewhat uncompetitive.
- Only 4% of leadership thought staff DO NOT receive the training they need
- Leadership would like to have more MONEY, TIME, and TRAINING
- The most needed services in our community are more affordable rental housing.
- The highest priority populations are families with children and youth and young adults.

## **Appendix IV: Summary of Public Comments**

**Public comment received July 16, 2025**

**Lucy Mueller, Northwest Workforce Council**

*Hi there, my name is Lucy, and I work for the Northwest Workforce Council. We help people with barriers to employment enter the workforce. I work with youth and young adults. Because of the*

*failure of Skagit County to provide basic needs to the people they're supposed to serve, when a youth or young adult tells me they do not have a place to spend the night-I have nothing to tell them. Today, I called 211 with a 22-year-old man and it took 45 minutes to get an answering machine to a shelter. This is a terrifying reality that someone with no resources must face alone 90% of the time.*

*It is especially disturbing for those involved in the justice system. Someone fresh out of jail who doesn't have a place to stay, can't even go to the nearest shelters in Oak Harbor or Bellingham because it would violate their parole to leave the county, and they would be thrown back in jail.*

*I got your email from the 2025-2030 Homeless Housing Plan. Your first meeting was back in April. What has been done? Have there been any plans made within the past three months? When can I start referring struggling children and young adults to a legitimate resource, instead of turning them out onto the streets?*

*I hope you can sympathize with the frustration I am experiencing, and the pain of those directly affected. I hope to hear back from you soon.*

**More public comments will be added after comment period October 1, 2025-November 5, 2025.**