

SKAGIT COUNTY

HOUSING SUMMIT

SUMMARY REPORT



SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

SPRING 2016

Photo credit: Steve Berentson, Housing Construction, Anacortes; Skagit Habitat for Humanity homebuyer building her home; Mercy Housing Northwest's Villa Kathleen in Burlington.

Skagit Housing Summit Summary Report

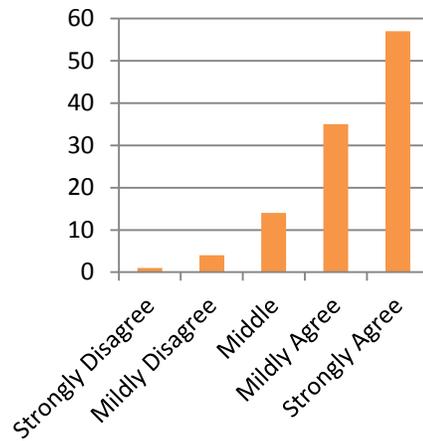


From a U.S. congressman and local mayors to social service providers and a recently homeless college student, more than 300 people gathered January 22, 2016 for a first-ever Housing Summit hosted by Skagit County Public Health. In the weeks following the event, the Public Health Department compiled participant comment cards and surveyed attendees for feedback on the event. The below data includes information from 133 comment cards and 111 follow-up survey responses.

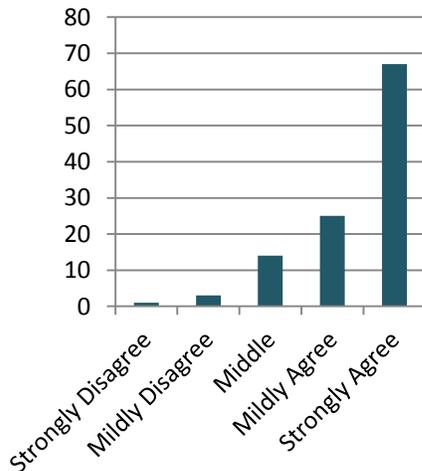


Emcee Joan Penney introduces a panel of local leaders. Panel, from left to right: SVC student Steven Simmons, Children’s Advocacy Center Director Veronica Lopez, Skagit Regional Health representative Kandi Devenere, and Anacortes Police Chief Bonnie Bowers.

The housing summit increased my understanding of affordable housing needs and solutions in Skagit Co.

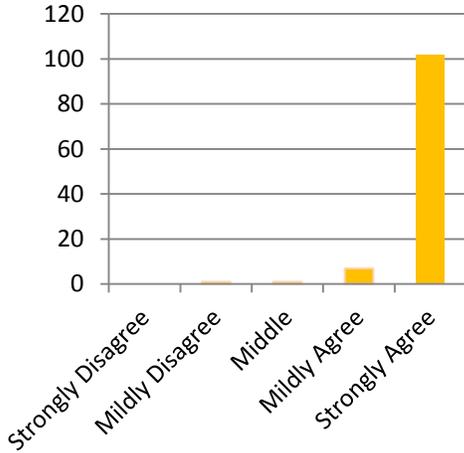


I am very satisfied with the quality of the housing summit event



Commissioner Ron Wesen welcomed the audience to the summit. Commissioner Wesen outlined that the summit was an effort to share vital information and engage partners throughout the County on the same objectives.

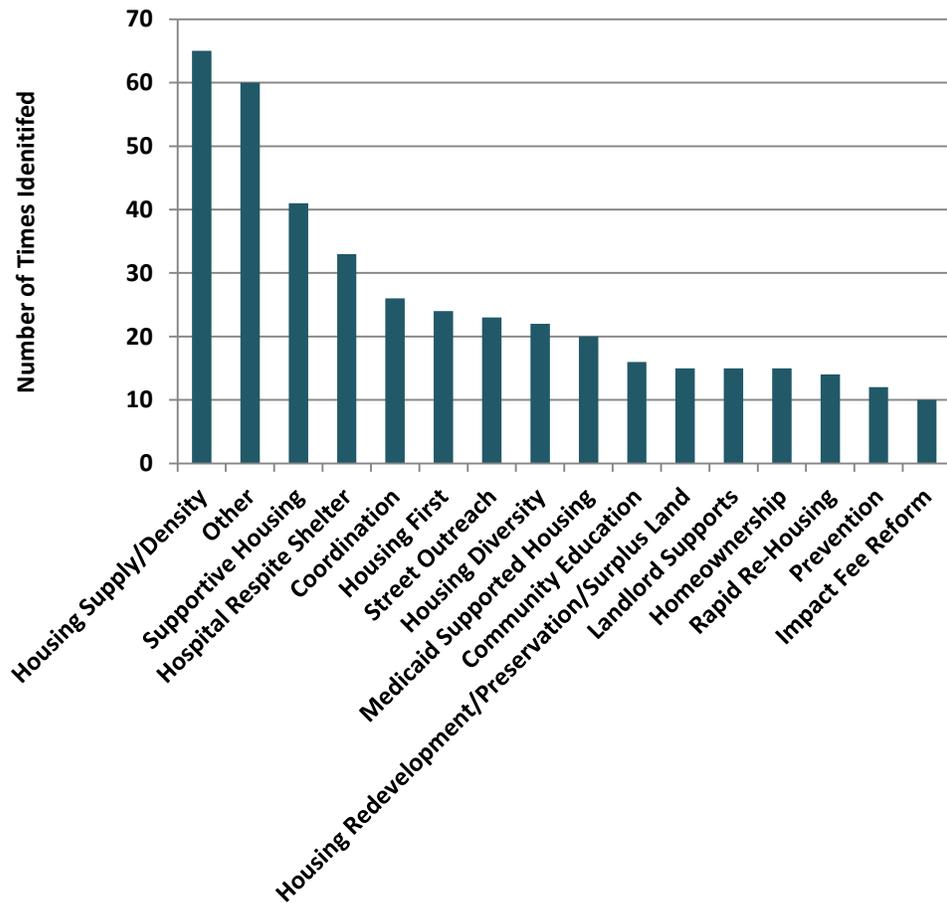
I believe Skagit County is experiencing a significant housing crisis



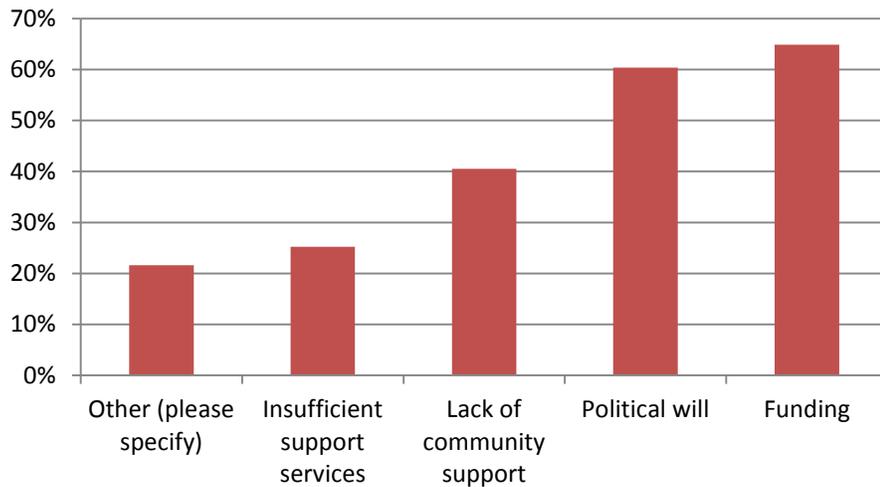
Summit participants were asked to discuss housing and homelessness issues as small groups. After attending the summit, 98% of survey respondents said they believed Skagit County is experiencing a significant housing crisis.

Attendees were asked to identify which strategies the community should prioritize for addressing affordable and homeless needs in Skagit County. Respondents were allowed to choose as many strategies as they liked. Other types of strategies participants identified include: mixed-income housing, eliminating barriers to housing, safe parking, funding, sweat-equity housing (through community jobs initiatives), land use incentives, day/night shelter creation, rental inspection and healthy housing, tenant protections, the use of vacant buildings for affordable housing, and task forces and planning to prioritize solutions.

Priority Strategies as Identified by Summit Participants



What do you believe are the top three barriers to addressing the lack of affordable housing in Skagit County? (check three)



Survey respondents believed land use issues, funding, and political will were the top three barriers to addressing the lack of affordable housing in Skagit County. Other types of barriers identified include: program eligibility criteria, market forces, public education, lack of community capacity, landlord/tenant issues, lack of subsidized units, racism, communication, and economic instability/jobs.



Keynote Speaker, Greg Winter (Executive Director, Opportunity Council) discusses some best practices in homeless housing.



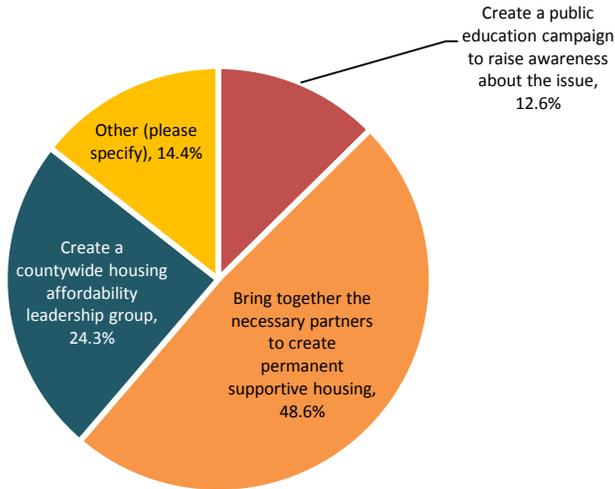
United States Congressman Rick Larsen shared an update on federal housing initiatives. In 2012, Congressman Larsen helped Skagit County secure 25 HUD/VASH vouchers for homeless veterans.

From a desire for additional multifamily development and zoning reforms to questions about starting a local housing trust fund, participants shared a wide variety of views and perspectives on housing needs and solutions in Skagit County. The community expressed mixed feelings about continued planning efforts, with some supporting new task forces and data collection and others wanting to act now. Some participants noted that there was a lot of information regarding need presented at the event, but less discussion of solutions. Survey respondents wanted to know how to learn more about the work of service providers in the area, what the County will be doing next to tackle this issue, and how to get involved in being part of the solution. Participants shared great ideas about cross-sector collaboration, including convening elected officials, schools, business, and banking representatives. There were a number of comments suggesting that impacted populations be better represented in affordable housing leadership efforts, including planning committees. Generally, people were pleased with the Summit and appreciated the opportunity to convene around this important issue.



Staff of the Catholic Community Services Farmworker Center discuss housing issues. Pictured, from left to right: Sister Susan Wells, Marta Martinez Olivera, Guillermina Bazante Hernandez.

Which is the first thing that should be done to address the affordable housing issue?



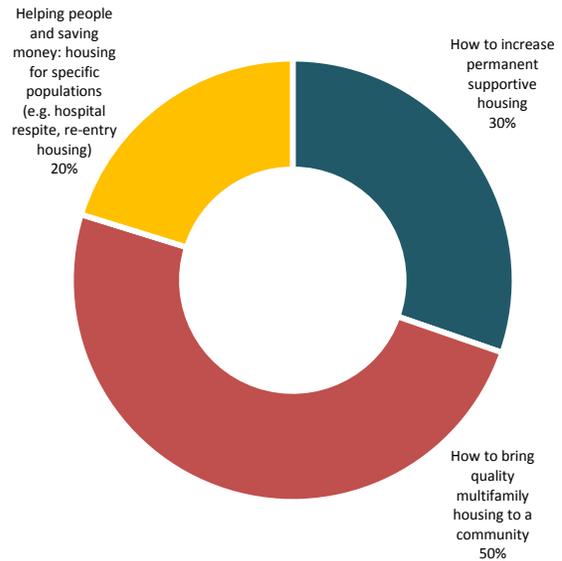
“There is enough talent and concern in the community to go head on with this crisis and leave it behind us very soon.” –Summit Participant

Other suggestions include: stimulating the private sector, including homeless individuals in affordable housing task forces/leadership initiatives, securing additional funding, removing barriers to housing, cross-sector collaboration, initiating a local housing trust fund, and density/code changes.

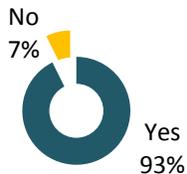


Sedro-Woolley City Councilmember Germaine Kornegay comments on housing preservation and health issues in Skagit County.

Which topic do you think is a priority for a Skagit County training?



Do you think Skagit County should host another housing summit in 2017?



Summit participants were overwhelmingly satisfied with the quality of the summit event and believe Skagit County should host another summit in 2017.

“We are all part of this solution and must stay connected.” –Summit Participant