



# Population Health Trust October Newsletter

## Community Advisory Board to the Skagit County Board of Health

October 30, 2023


As the weather begins to shift, many of us relish rainy days inside. Having a warm, dry place to take shelter is something that we may take for granted. Unfortunately, too many in our community do not have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing. This year in Skagit County, 2,944 adults and children sought and qualified for homeless services. During the 2022-2023 school year, 759 students were homeless. Without housing, all other health challenges are multiplied.

### Homeless Students, By Type & Per 1,000 Enrolled in Public Schools as Defined by McKinney-Vento

6.4.1 Homeless Students, By Type & Per 1,000 Students Enrolled in Public Schools as Defined by McKinney-Vento



Given the connection between housing and population health, Housing (HO) was identified as a priority area in the [2022 COVID Recovery Plan](#).

<div>HOUSING (HO)</div> <div></div>	GOALS		
	<div><b>1</b> Everyone in Skagit County has the opportunity for stable, safe, and affordable housing.</div> <div><b>2</b> County and local jurisdictions actively collaborate on policy and programming to create a complete housing continuum that meets the needs of residents at ALL income levels.</div>		
STRATEGIES			
<b>HO1</b> Advocate for cross-organizational and cross-jurisdictional efforts on housing affordability and availability, especially those that focus on housing as a population health issue.	<b>HO2</b> Increase diversity of options to address local housing needs such as drop-in emergency shelter, low-barrier year-round shelter, permanent supported housing, Community Resource Centers in schools, and affordable housing.	<b>HO3</b> Increase awareness of housing resources and supports to people of color, and other minority groups.	

Like many challenges in the recovery plan, the issue of ensuring that all have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing is complex. Below are updates on two initiatives that are working to improve the situation locally.

## North Star

Recognizing the need for a coordinated response to housing and homelessness, the Skagit County Commissioners and the Mayors of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley established [North Star](#) in 2022. By joining forces across jurisdictions to pool resources, coordinate action, and streamline essential community services, North Star is working to make systems change and ensure that individuals suffering the most get effective care, support, and connections to thrive. In order to coordinate crisis response, outreach and recovery services, and housing, the effort includes services providers, law enforcement, and many others across the county. Though North Star is a long-term effort, the two current areas of focus are to create more affordable housing and coordinate care so that the community members experiencing chronic homelessness and behavioral health issues receive the support they need and deserve.

## Housing Consortium

Committed to ensuring that housing is available, affordable, and of sufficient quality for all income levels in Skagit County, the [Housing Consortium](#) encourages collaboration across governments,

non-profits, private businesses, and religious organization. Through collaboration the group works to build local capacity, harmonizing regulations, and educating the public about the importance of affordable housing for all in Skagit County. The group is now incorporated as a non-profit, has developed a website, and a workplan for 2023.

## **Martha's Place**

Providing 70 units of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) to individuals who have a history of homelessness and struggle with mental health, substance use, or a disability, [Martha's Place](#) opened in May of 2023. Operated by Catholic Housing Services of Washington the housing units will help to address the increase in the number of individuals who are unsheltered or experiencing chronic homelessness and provide a community of support for individuals to live more stable lives.

Though there still much to be done to ensure that all Skagitonians have access to safe, affordable, and stable housing, these initiatives and others are doing much to improve the lives of many.

### **Resources:**

- [Housing and Homelessness](#): Skagit County Human Services
- [Housing](#): Skagit County Trends

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Thank you for your partnership in keeping Skagit County healthy!



The Population Health Trust was founded in 2015 and is the Community Advisory Board to the Skagit County Board of Health. For more information, check out our [website](#).

### **Population Health Trust**

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