SOUTH KING HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PARTNERSHIP

2017 Year-End Report

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Introduction

Over the past eight years, South King County (SKC) stakeholders have met to deepen cross-jurisdictional coordination, create a common understanding for housing and homelessness needs and strategies for SKC, and implement strategies in the *SKC Response to Homelessness.* However, in the midst of a rapidly growing Seattle economy, poverty and unemployment has moved to the King County suburbs[1]. This trend is particularly striking in South King County where an increase in poverty has created stark needs for human services that local governments feel ill-equipped to address alone. More than 35,000 SKC households are paying over half their income for housing costs[2], putting them at risk of losing their housing if faced with a household financial emergency. Furthermore, 3,445 SKC homeless students were identified in the 2015-2016 school year alone[3], a 20% increase from the previous year. The most recent Point in Time count of unsheltered homeless individuals identified 1,172 individuals sleeping outside in selected areas of South King County in January 2017. The methodology of the Point in Time count changed between the 2016 and 2017 counts, making it impossible to compare year-over-year figures. However, we know that the count, while more widely spread this year, is a minimum estimate, and that the issue of unsheltered homelessness is larger and more pervasive than we are able to accurately capture within the confines of a visual count.

SKHHP supports the groups that have been meeting in SKC to address these issues, including the Homelessness Action Committee (HAC) and the SKC Joint Planners and Developers workgroup. SKHHP aims to: regularly convene, organize, and expand the network of stakeholders working to end homelessness and address affordable housing needs in SKC; improve the alignment of county and state homeless and affordable housing interventions and funding opportunities with SKC interests; provide technical assistance to support the implementation of comprehensive plan policies; improve SKC stakeholders' understanding of promising practices and their potential for local impact; and determine and implement strategies that achieve program sustainability.

In January 2016, HDC hired a South King County Housing Planner responsible for the coordination of SKHHP and the implementation of these goals. Over the course of the three year grant period, the plan was for this staff person to work

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[1] http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/the-avenue/posts/2014/12/17-lessons-innovators-suburban-poverty-kneebone-berube

[2] http://huduser.org/portal/datasets/cp/CHAS/data_querytool_chas.html

[3] http://www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/pubdocs/2015-16DistrictSummary.xlsx

with stakeholders across South King County on collective impact approaches to housing and homelessness issues. Through convening, informing, and supporting these stakeholders, SKHHP hopes to catalyze the network to implement the SKC Response strategies, speak with a united voice, implement comprehensive plan policies, and develop a sustainability plan for this work. Specifically, SKHHP intends to see the following results:

- County and state decision makers receive input from SKC stakeholders early in the decision making process to ensure a more effective and efficient public engagement process
- South King County stakeholders are better informed of opportunities to impact regional and state housing programs and policies, including regional plans, state legislative proposals, and funding opportunities
- South King County stakeholders are better able to speak with a united voice to ensure external programs and policies address local community needs
- South King County stakeholders, including those in the education, employment, and health sectors, are more engaged in housing and homelessness activities

Community and elected leaders in South King County recognize the importance of being coordinated in order to achieve results. Over the last six months of this project, SKHHP staff has worked to further these goals by convening key stakeholders, providing technical assistance and support, supporting local policy development and implementation, highlighting SKC voices at decision making tables, and supporting the exploration of a long-term regional framework beyond this project.

Progress Updates

A significant development for the SKHHP project occurred in October 2017 when SKC Housing Planner Joy Scott resigned to accept a position with the City of Auburn. On an interim basis, the HDC Policy Team stepped forward to continue the work in South King County. Following the election in November, there was a further development when HDC Government Relations and Policy Director Kylie Rolf accepted a senior position in the Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan administration.

4

November 15, 2017 HAC Meeting

Staff members from the cities of Federal Way, SeaTac, and Kent attended, as did staff from All Home and Neighborhood House.

Current shelter capacity in South King County was discussed:

- Federal Way has one rotating men's shelter and one stationary women's shelter, both of which contract with CCS for services. The city is exploring whether churches may be able to provide additional shelter space. There is enthusiasm around bringing people together (the Mayor hosted a breakfast the month on this topic with about 40 people from the faith community), but no strong commitments yet. Federal Way also has a day center, which has been open for less than a year and operates Monday-Friday.

- Mary's Place is interested in opening a shelter in South King County, but doesn't have a location. They were looking at a site in Tukwila, but it fell through.

- Kent has a severe weather shelter at Kent Lutheran Church (outside of the City budget and only works if the church is available), as well as a year-round rotating men's' shelter, a six-month women's shelter, and a women's day center/shelter/housing program run by Kent Hope.

- Renton has a family shelter at City Hall and a men's shelter, as well as an emergency shelter.

- Auburn has the Ray of Hope Day Center and is opening a shelter this month at Valley Cities.

The group discussed the idea of doing a shelter inventory for South King County and then comparing it against the level of need, as demonstrated by the number of people entering homelessness from a SKC zip code. However, participants didn't think this level of data would be available from All Home.

The group also discussed a resource guide for South King County, but participants shared that these types of guides are very hard to keep up to date and often give the impression that resources are available when, in reality, the shelters listed are almost always full to capacity already.

Members of the group also discussed what is most useful about HAC meetings and the main points mentioned were the opportunity for interaction between providers and city staff and having a collective SKC voice to lobby All Home and King County. At future meetings group members expressed a desire to discuss:

- Advocacy at regional/state level
- SKC response to All Home issues

- Big picture – what's happening out there? How does SKC fit into it?
- Communication between providers and cities

Renton December 4, 2017 Committee of the Whole Meeting: Expanding SOID protections

Staff from the City of Renton requested that staff from HDC attend the Council's Committee of the Whole meeting in order to provide additional information about possibly expanding the City's existing Source of Income Discrimination protections. Nicki Olivier Hellenkamp attended and shared information about types of programs that are not covered by the current ordinance, which only applies to Section 8 voucher holders. The Committee requested that staff create two potential versions of the ordinance, to be brought back to the Committee of the Whole in early 2018.

Building Relationships with Newly Elected Councilmembers

South King County cities elected a number of new councilmembers in November and we hope to work to educate and build relationships with them as they get up to speed.

Looking Forward Into 2018

2018 marks the final of three years of the South King County Housing and Homelessness Partnership effort led by South King County cities and supported by the Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County.

With one year remaining, the convening and information sharing work will continue under the leadership of HDC staff while a preponderance of energy will focus on the design and implementation of a sustainable model for carrying out the work in 2019 and beyond and matching it up with a governance structure and decision rights that honor the uniqueness of South King County cities.

The City of Auburn, under the leadership of Mayor Nancy Backus, has indicated willingness to help bring city leaders together with focused convenings on developing this new structure and its focus. HDC will coordinate this work with the assistance of professional facilitation to ensure full completion and execution. At the time of preparation of this report, a contract has been signed with an experienced consultant team that will be introduced in January 2018.

Homelessness has grown as a major challenge throughout all of King County. The lack of affordable housing and increasingly unaffordable rents permeates South King County. More than ever, innovative strategies and promising practices are essential to how we move forward.