

Community Solutions Workgroup – Continuum of Housing Implementation Matrix

Strategy	Lead Organization	Partner Organization(s)	Description	Next Steps & Timing	Status
Strategies Ready for Implementation					
Acquire, preserve, and improve existing affordable apartment blocks in the city (purchase units in gentrifying areas)	City	All local and regional affordable housing development, management, and financing agencies; County; private development community	This strategy addresses the gap in affordable housing inventory by preserving existing stock. The City in partnership with agencies would support the strategic acquisition of apartment buildings which are still affordable for low-income residents with a goal of preventing future displacement. This strategy would target neighborhoods at risk of gentrification based on recent or planned infrastructure investments or other triggers that correspond to increased property values over time.	Community Development (CD) will work with Planning staff to review plans for public infrastructure and transportation improvements, particularly in Urban Village areas, and then identify currently affordable multi-family housing units and develop a list of priority properties. CD will also work on funding strategy options. These efforts will be through 2018.	Planned for 2018
Construct new housing units	City	All local and regional affordable housing development, management, and financing agencies; County; private development community	This strategy addresses the gap in affordable housing inventory by supporting more housing developments managed specifically for rental to low-income households who face housing insecurity. This strategy also increases the overall housing stock available in the City, contributing to slowing the escalation of housing costs.	The City is doing the following to support additional development: funding is available for dedicated affordable housing through NOFAs and the Acquisition & Opportunity fund; planning staff is working with Council to ease zoning constraints the restrict unreasonable development, consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies.	Ongoing
Change zoning to support greater diversity of housing products in the market	City	All – community advocacy	The strategy addresses the inventory gap by making more housing available at price-points that are affordable to working families and individuals through the private market. The current land area of Bellingham is predominantly zoned for single-family housing only, leaving fewer areas where more affordable housing types – like townhomes, duplexes, and apartments – are allowed. Changing these zoning regulations would accommodate other types of building in more areas of the City, instead of concentrating additional density and multi-family housing in a few pockets.	Among the City’s Fair Housing Goals submitted to HUD in October 2017, City Staff will review existing policies that support increased housing choices, including “expanded higher density and infill housing forms, and increased housing options within single-family neighborhood zones.” Planning staff and Commission/Council are currently reviewing possible changes to zoning that relate to this. CD staff support these efforts as needed.	Under review

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Access and provide more funding for expanded housing case managers/landlord liaisons	Whatcom County	City, PeaceHealth, and partner agencies providing housing case management and/or landlord liaison services	This strategy addresses service gaps. Currently, housing service providers have seen their caseloads continue to grow, without extra funding. By funding more case managers, households on the housing interest pool could be moved into appropriate, stable housing more quickly. Landlord liaisons have also been successful in working with private landlords and property management companies to make more housing units available to those who have housing vouchers or barriers to housing in their rental history.	Next Steps include seeking other funding opportunities that may also include additional taxes. Re-evaluate current funding for Case Management and Rental Assistance to ensure appropriate balance within existing funding.	Under review
Create a rental rehab program that makes funding available to landlords who rent to low-income tenants for upgrades required to pass inspections	Opportunity Council	Lydia Place, Bellingham/Whatcom County Housing Authority, Northwest Youth Services, City	Property owners who rent to Section 8 and other voucher holders must pass health and safety inspections, which are a bit more rigorous than Bellingham's own rental registry inspection. In order to increase inventory available to these tenants, this strategy would develop a funding program which landlords could use to make health and safety repairs and upgrades to meet those standards.	Oppco's Building Performance Center operates a number of housing rehabilitation, weatherization, and energy efficiency programs. Some of these programs may be used for, or may act as models for a multi-family rental housing program that is marketed to landlords who participate in housing voucher programs. There are some challenges to using these traditional programs (e.g. weatherization funds cannot be used to make legally required repairs). However, it will be useful to convene a group to explore the potential use of existing resources as incentives, or to create a new program with more flexible funding. Oppco will convene a small group of local experts to examine the feasibility of using existing or expanding similar programs targeting the goals of this recommendation. Timeline: By end of April 2018	Impacted by the state capital budget delay Stakeholder group planned for 2018
Housing equity audit by neighborhood	City	TBD	This strategy addresses the cultural gap and barrier of public opposition to allowing more diversity of housing types in all neighborhoods. In the past, cities have done equity audits of public investments	After submission of the Consolidated Plan to HUD in May 2018, Community Development staff will consult with other departments for guidance on conducting an equity audit by neighborhood.	Planned for 2018-2019

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			such as parks and transportation. Conducting a systematic housing equity audit would allow decision-makers to talk in more concrete terms about the disparities in access to housing by neighborhood, and could inform planning decisions.	Existing data can also be compiled and previewed by the CDAB.	
Regular check-ins between local funders and service providers to adapt to changing needs and trends	City	Whatcom County	This strategy addresses a collaboration and communication gap. Some service providers reported that their grants sometimes held them to standards that were not appropriate or effective measures of success, and that situations and needs are ever changing. Having more frequent, face-to-face communication with donors, and having donors strategically align standards with one another whenever feasible, could help avoid some of these problems and make service dollars more impactful.	The City and County are meeting to discuss common agency contracts and potential alignment of performance measures. The City and County both will continue to facilitate open dialogue and discussion with grantees. Additional coordinated resources meetings will occur in 2018 where agencies and funders can together discuss adapting to changing service needs in the community.	Planned at least quarterly throughout 2018
Develop a community liaison or trained peer health worker program to help keep people in housing and integrate within the broader community	Chuckanut Health Foundation	Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness, Opportunity Council, PeaceHealth, North Sound Accountable Community of Health, Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement, County	Throughout the workgroup process, the idea of enlisting the expertise of those who have lived experiences with homelessness or housing instability resurfaced again and again. This strategy could help address a service gap that exists where the appropriate role of a caseworker ends. Trained peers or community liaisons with lived experience could be available 24/7, and trained to assist those exiting homelessness with independent living skills, coping mechanisms, social inclusion, and healthy choices.	CHF and PeaceHealth have funded the Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement to explore and establish a Community Health Worker model that addresses entrenched racial and economic disparities around access to healthcare, social services and housing. Initial funded supported research and exploration including a highly targeted assessment in the Sumas/Everson/Nooksack area. Next steps are to establish a CHW Network informed by local stakeholder forums. This will serve as the foundation for collaborating with other partners to operationalize the CHW model around the county.	Forums and a CHW conference in May 2018 to engage stakeholders in developing a sustainable model.
Coordinate among services and programs to promote social inclusion and community building	Lighthouse Mission Ministries	Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness, partner agencies providing case	The desire to belong and to be accepted is a fundamental human need. Our workgroup discussions and survey of service providers revealed that a lack of social inclusion is a significant barrier	LMM or partner agencies engage centers for the newly-housed as well as community building groups to assess feasibility. LMM or partner agencies network them – Summer 2018.	Planned throughout 2018

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		management for people experiencing homelessness or newly housed, faith-based groups, other community groups	to successful housing and recovery for the homeless population, and no current programs explicitly target this gap. There are many local community organizations (such as various interest clubs, WWU, faith groups) who could participate by introducing clients to a new hobby, or giving them something to do and new friends with whom to do it. There is a need to coordinate and enlist volunteers to make this happen.	LMM starts STREET CONNECT early intervention relationship program – Feb 2018. LMM starts Mentorship aftercare program – Fall 2018.	
Light-touch case management services available for those with lower vulnerability scores to get them housed quickly	Opportunity Council	County, City, partner agencies in the Coordinated Entry system	As the number of clients on the housing pool grows, caseworkers by necessity prioritize those who have the highest degree of vulnerability. That can mean that households who have relatively lower level intensity of needs can remain on the waiting list for many months. This strategy is meant to address that service gap.	As the operator of Coordinated Entry, Oppco pursued and received a capacity building foundation grant to pay for 0.5 FTE of light touch services. Oppco will pursue additional funding from the City and others to fund light touch housing case management services for this population. As part of any new light touch services, those served will be encouraged to participate in housing search sessions facilitated weekly by OC staff at 1111 Cornwall office.	One-time funding for 0.5 FTE beginning January 2018
Community-wide training about how to connect with and include homeless population	Whatcom County	City, Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness	Some organizations within the community (such as the public library, school district, and health department) have had great success with trainings that help public employees better understand the trauma of homelessness and create more welcoming environments for those who are experiencing homelessness. This strategy would help to address a lack of social inclusion by offering training at the community level.	Whatcom County will take the lead in establishing a formal training committee consisting of community providers. Initial goals will be to review existing survey results on identified training needs and then update those results. A plan for ongoing training and topics will be created.	February 2018 going forward

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Strategies Requiring More Research					
Increase programs that enable and empower tenants who receive subsidized housing to eventually transition out and become integrated within the community	Bellingham/Whatcom County Housing Authority	City, County, Whatcom Dream	Housing costs continue to rise, even as wages do not. There is a disincentive for beneficiaries of low-income housing to seek employment opportunities or earn higher wages, as doing so could disqualify the tenant from their housing, without the ability to afford living anywhere else. This strategy aims to investigate the prevalence of this 'benefits cliff' with regard to housing, and learn how to help households eventually transition to financial independence.	1. Identify prevalence of issue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COB consolidated plan survey (closes Feb 5, 2018). • BHA survey of program participants (sample size) complete by January 31, 2018. 2. Identify possible solutions. 3. Convene meeting with partner orgs to review survey data, develop next steps.	After surveys close and analysis completed, partners will convene (Spring 2018)
Expand mobile health services	Whatcom County Health Department	Unity Care, Sea Mar (federally qualified health centers)	The most vulnerable clients in need of a variety of physical and mental health services have multiple barriers to making and keeping appointments at disbursed office locations. Bringing the services to the client is a best practice for overcoming these barriers, though the availability of these mobile services is less than the need.	Whatcom County will discuss the need with the local FQHCs to determine what opportunities may exist.	January 2018 going forward
Study options for general transportation services and decide if appropriate to integrate into other strategies	City	TBD	Transportation is a major barrier for many homeless individuals and families as they search for housing. Opportunities to get to apartment viewings and turn in rental applications can be spontaneous and immediate. Additionally, caseworkers report they spend a significant amount of time with clients just driving them to appointments for various services. General transportation services may be needed, depending on how this issue aligns with other strategies being pursued.	After Whatcom County Health Department completes initial investigation for the strategy above, the City will evaluate the unmet need for non-medical transportation. Doing so may include convening a stakeholder group of service providers, or conducting an informal survey to assess if time and money being spent for transportation could be better provided by a transportation service.	Begin second half of 2018

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Create an additional staff position to leverage resources, funding, and development deals more strategically and proactively; and utilize innovative new funding models which are already being implemented elsewhere to build new housing	City	Opportunity Council, PeaceHealth	This strategy is meant to generate new funding sources and new affordable housing units via a new staff position crafted to leverage funding and multiply housing resources. More research would seek to define specific tasks and services needed to promote additional development and generate financing interest.	Such a position would be contingent on renewal of the Housing Levy. The City Council's recommendation to put a second levy to voters will be likely in May 2018. If approved by Council and the public, the City will consult with partner agencies to develop a potential job description and scope. In the meantime, the City is looking at other opportunities to be more proactive about housing production (see earlier strategies).	Planned
Assess existing workforce development programs, cultivate relationships with employers and/or develop linkages among programs to better serve clients who are homeless and formerly homeless	Opportunity Council	Northwest Youth Services	A gap identified by the workgroup was appropriate job training and employment opportunities for those who have experienced homelessness. There are several organizations in Bellingham that offer job training services, and more research is needed to see if these programs have the capacity to place individuals that may have multiple barriers to employment.	Oppco is in the process of two related initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding employment services in a new, dedicated space at 625 Cornwall Ave. • Exploring the feasibility of adding a new Supported Employment program as part of the WA State Healthcare Authority's Medicaid Transformation initiative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 625 Cornwall emplmnt servs beginning January 2018. • Supported Employment feasibility determined by March 2018.
Create an insurance or damage mitigation fund to minimize the risks to landlords renting to tenants with no/poor rental history	Opportunity Council	Bellingham/Whatcom County Housing Authority	This strategy addresses both cultural and inventory barriers to housing. In an already tight housing market with low vacancy rates, a housing voucher can inhibit the likelihood of finding affordable housing. This strategy would offer an incentive to landlords, in the form of a fund they could tap into if there were damages to any unit rented to Section 8 or other voucher-holders exceeding the security deposit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oppco will research the status of the WA State Dept. of Commerce Landlord Mitigation Program, especially in light of COB likely passing source of income discrimination ordinance, a prerequisite for participation in the state program. • Next, contact several participating orgs from other regions to explore how well it is working. • Review historical data from Oppco's own risks mitigation program to estimate the frequency, range, and average costs of mitigation events. • Draft a set of recommended actions to implement a local program. 	First half 2018

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Many other strategies were also identified by the workgroup, but not prioritized. They are included here for reference, as future priorities may change.
Public education/engagement: work to better inform the public about the housing system and how it works
Tenant education: more support through trained Peer Advocates, as well as from case managers or landlord liaisons, with skills training as to how to be a successful tenant
Redefine definition of family (no more than 3 unrelated individuals)
Develop dedicated recovery housing for drug court participants to increase the efficacy of the Drug Court program
Agencies need to continue to equip their staff with evidence-based training better serve people with high needs and facilitate transitions along the continuum
Provide a forum where comprehensive solutions can be vetted and funders, service providers, development and landlord community, can propose how they could best contribute
Brainstorm ways the City can bring more willing development partners to the table
A shared data system to help us manage high-utilizers of EMS, ED, and BH crisis services, built on the Intensive Case Management system at WAHA (i.e., GRACE)
Agencies at all levels of the continuum need to capture information for our system to better facilitate care transitions
Establish a goal around community resiliency
Hire a specialist consultant to help put together a complex funding mix of tax credits and other financing mechanisms for multi-use projects
Provide additional vouchers/long-term subsidy options
Initiate a program to help pay off rental debt

WORKING DOCUMENT