

Homelessness Task Force Recommendations

January 2022



Task Force Demographics

64% of Task Force Members are residents of Edmonds (9 of 14); multi-disciplinary all serving Edmonds

Representing:

- 2 community service providers
 - YWCA Pathways Shelter for Women and Children; Korean Community Service Center
- 3 faith-based service providers in Edmonds
 - St. Albans Church; St. Vincent de Paul / Holy Rosary; Edmonds Lutheran Church
- 2 Social Workers – Edmonds Senior Center; Snohomish County Public Defenders Office
- 2 First Responders – Edmonds Police Department; South County Fire Community Paramedics
- 2 Edmonds City Councilmembers & 3 City Staff (2 from Human Services and 1 from Planning)



Task Force Members

- Mary Anne Dillon – Executive Director YWCA Pathways for Women (only South County Shelter)
- Joomi Kim – Director Korean Community Service Center
- Mark Koehn – St. Vincent de Paul / Holy Rosary (provide motel & utility vouchers, food, beds & more)
- Pastor Tim Oleson – Edmonds Lutheran (provide meal for unhoused and in partnership with Housing Hope)
- Reverend Greg Peters – St. Albans Church
- Michelle Reitan, MSW – Edmonds Senior Center
- Eric Johnsen, MSW – Snohomish County Public Defenders Association
- Shane Hawley – Acting Assistant Police Chief Edmonds PD
- Nicole Picknell – Captain South County Fire Community Resource Paramedics
- Vivian Olson – Edmonds City Councilmember
- Adrienne Fraley-Monillas – Former Edmonds City Councilmember
- Brad Shipley – Associate Planner, City of Edmonds Planning Department
- Mindy Woods – Human Services Program Manager, City of Edmonds
- Shannon Burley – Deputy Director, Parks, Recreation, Cultural and Human Services, City of Edmonds



Task Force Meeting Details

- **5 virtual meetings & 2 online feedback requests (September 29 – December 22, 2021)**
- 7 presentations
 - Washington Kids in Transition – youth homelessness
 - The Hand Up Project – motel respite program with wrap around services in Snohomish County
 - Verdant Health Commission – current project update and funding parameters
 - Snohomish County Human Services Department & Office of Recovery – County plans to address homelessness
 - City of Edmonds Planning Department – affordable housing in Edmonds
 - HASCO – Snohomish County affordable housing snapshot
 - Snohomish County Housing Justice Project Legal Team
- Question and Answer with Kone Consulting, supporting ongoing homelessness assessment
- Three breakout groups; group recommendations; recommendation refinement

Acknowledgements

- Homelessness comes in all shapes and sizes, solutions need to be tailored to the individuals or families on a case by case basis while recognizing that in certain cases there may not be a solution.
- Homelessness is a challenge which extends far beyond the City of Edmonds and will require assistance from the federal, state and county government.
- Many current residents are one catastrophic event (workplace injury, health issue, sudden job loss, domestic violence, rent increase, car repair) away from being housing insecure; additionally our residents who are elderly and people with disabilities living on social security are equally vulnerable.
- There is one shelter in South County, with 17 beds for women and children only. Current wait time is 2-4 months.



Acknowledgements

- Parks and other public spaces should be accessible and safe for all users. Further, allowing camping in public parks is not a humane approach to addressing the issue of homelessness as it does little to help move an individual out of their situation.
- Before enforcing unauthorized use of public space, the City has a constitutional obligation (see Martin versus Boise) to provide shelter for persons experiencing homelessness. **The Task Force does not recommend criminalizing homelessness** but rather increasing shelter and working to stabilize those who are unsheltered.
- These recommendations are not intended to supersede or circumvent the recommendations made through the Snohomish County HART report and the Edmonds Citizens Housing Commission recommendation, both should be reviewed and considered. The lack of affordable housing must be addressed in order to make any long-term impact.



Temporary shelter / housing for unhoused residents

Immediate:

- Create a flex fund for the Edmonds Human Services Department to procure motel rooms as necessary after hours, on weekends and holidays until individuals can be connected to other services, flex funds utilize existing budget allocation.

Short-Term (2022-23):

- Partner with Snohomish County to create a motel respite program in South County similar to the larger County facility in Everett. Facility should provide on-site 24-hour services for homeless individuals suffering from behavior health disorders. Services should include but are not limited to detox, counseling, vocational training, transportation to medical appointments, medication assistance and more. With the passing of HB 1590 in Snohomish County, we expect an increase in available funding.

Address Unauthorized use of Public Spaces

Immediate:

- Define areas that homeless are not allowed to reside for instance current park hours are dawn to dusk and as such overnight camping without permit is not allowed and is enforceable by Edmonds PD.

Short-Term (2022-23):

- Work to ensure shelter availability and property storage are available and resources in place to enforce/adhere to policies before considering no camping laws as is required by federal law.
- Evaluate current city code and consider adopting limits on the number of days cars can be un-moved if not in place already.

Assist vulnerable residents to prevent homelessness

Immediate:

- Continue distributing ARPA household grants to low income families.

Short-Term (2022-23):

- Partner with a home sharing organization connecting those needing shelter with those who have available space.
- Establish a city fund for rental assistance for 2025 and beyond (once ARPA funding has run out).

Long-Term (2022-24):

- Evaluate and seek to establish a centralized care system similar to Bellevue in which first responders work in collaboration with City Social Workers to establish consistent case management for clients. Centralizing resource navigation requires a larger staff but could potentially be built in collaboration with Verdant and South County Fire.

Future Consideration

- Build and/or support development of low income (subsidized) low barrier permanent supportive housing such as Housing Hope. Many unhoused people have disabilities or histories of trauma that preclude them from steady employment, income and access to standard housing.
- Provide financial support to the We All Belong emergency shelter to assist in expanding capacity and availability for a variety of weather emergency situations to include cold weather, warm weather, wind, catastrophic events and more. Current need is for more volunteers before securing larger space.
- Support the Lynnwood Hygiene Center's efforts to identify a new location and remain operational providing a South County Homeless Day Shelter with shower, meal and laundry services.

Future Consideration

- Install dual message signs near places people tend to panhandle. Message should include information on where to get help and discouraging contributing to panhandlers.
- Revise code to consider form rather than density; encouraging developers to building more affordable housing types.
- Work with developers to create dorm-like apodment complexes (shared kitchen and restrooms) and/or work with faith based organizations to add single person shelters to support individuals who need simple affordable housing.
- Provide educational sessions for seniors and their families regarding how to leverage existing home equity into funds available for living expenses.