

Homelessness

OUTCOME: PROVIDE SUFFICIENT AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL KING COUNTY RESIDENTS

Countywide Planning Policy Rationale

“Countywide programs should provide the following types of housing and related services: 1) Low income housing development, including new construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation; 2) Housing assistance, such as rental vouchers and supportive services; 3) Assistance to expand the capacity of nonprofit organizations to develop housing provide housing related services; 4) Programs to assist homeless individuals and families; 5) Programs to prevent homelessness; and 6) Assistance to low and moderate-income buyers. (AH-2A)

Between 2000 and 2004, the estimated homeless population in King County increased nearly 30%, ten times the rate of population growth experienced by the County as a whole. Estimates suggest that over 8,300 people in King County are homeless on a typical night in 2004, or about 0.47% of the County population. According to the Committee to End Homelessness in King County, 24,000 people in King County will experience an episode of homelessness in the course of a year.

Figure 23.1

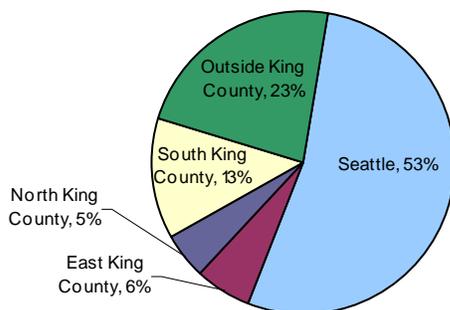
Estimated Number and Percent of Homeless Persons				
	2000	2002	2004	2006
Street Count	1,085	2,040	2,216	1,946
Sheltered Homeless	4,500	4,675	4,636	5,964
Estimated Uncounted	915	1,265	1,484	na
Total	6,500	7,980	8,336	na
Percent of Population	0.37%	0.45%	0.47%	na

The Seattle-King County One Night Count (ONC) is a tally of unsheltered persons and a survey of the sheltered homeless community. In January 2006, ONC counted 1,946 persons on the street and surveyed another 5,964 in emergency and transitional housing.

About 83% of the 1,946 unsheltered homeless persons were in Seattle. Of the 5,964 sheltered homeless persons, 41% were in emergency shelters with the remainder in transitional housing. Of those surveyed, 36% were single men and another 48% were individuals in families with children. Almost one-third of the homeless sheltered persons were children under the age of 18.

Figure 23.2

Origin of Homeless Households in King County's Emergency Shelters and Transitional Programs (2006)



The majority of homeless persons in King County have some source of income, with 16% of the population surveyed by ONC earning income through employment. There is a large deficit of affordable rental housing for households earning less than 30% of median income. In 2006, a household earning \$18,200 (30% of median income) can afford no more than \$455 per month in rent.

In a survey of 24 U.S. cities in 2005, The United States Conference of Mayors - Sodexo, Inc identified the lack of affordable housing as the leading cause of homelessness in America. Other causes included (in order of frequency cited by surveyed cities) low-paying jobs, mental illness and the lack of needed services, substance abuse and the lack of needed services, domestic violence, unemployment, poverty and prisoner re-entry.