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# Homelessness in Burien:

Short-term Options and Long-term Strategies



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## Executive Summary

In response to a perceived surge in homelessness the City of Burien contracted with the Evans School of Public Policy for research on homelessness in Burien. Specifically, the city wanted to investigate the primary factors driving homelessness in their city, demographic characteristics the city's homeless, and strategies to mitigate issues around homelessness. To investigate these questions our team conducted a literature review, collected data, ran a policy analysis of short-term options, and synthesized long-term options.

The literature review provides our frame for understanding homelessness and specific intervention strategies. This review provided us with the frame that homelessness is a systemic issue driven by societal failure. This review also identified housing-first as the most promising intervention strategy currently available.

The data collection efforts provide a limited description of homelessness in Burien with qualitative interviews and simple analysis of quantitative records. Due to the limited amount of interviews we were able to conduct and the fragmentation of homelessness data we cannot make any generalizable conclusions about the homeless population in Burien.

The policy analysis compares six short-term options on the equity of their impact, their effectiveness, and their feasibility. The options compared are:

- Mobile Shower Unit
- Laundry Subsidies
- Public Lockers
- Tent Encampment
- Overnight Car-Camp Lot
- Transportation Subsidies

The analysis did not find one of these options dominant over the other options, but instead found that the options have trade-offs between feasibility and effectiveness.

The long-term strategies identified in the report are participating in regional efforts to end homelessness, shifting institutional focuses toward the issue of homelessness, and pursuing affordable housing. These strategies are not mutually exclusive and can work together in concert.



## **Purpose of Research**

The purpose of this research is to provide the City of Burien with information to inform policy making regarding homelessness. Research is intended to: provide information regarding the scope, trend, and demographics of homelessness in Burien; gather perspectives of stakeholders, and relate best practices. The information in this report should serve to inform current decision-making as well as provide anticipation for future action.

## **Problem Statement**

There is a perception that the City of Burien is experiencing an increase in number of homeless people. This is creating both conflicts over the use of public space, such as parks and public facilities, and a growing negative public perception of people experiencing homelessness.

## **Research Questions**

The primary question of our research is: What short-term options and long-term strategies are available to the City of Burien to mitigate conflicts over the use of public space and improve relationships among its residents. To answer this question we will try to answer the following three sub questions:

- What are the scope, trend, and demographics of homelessness in Burien?
- What are the perspectives of Burien stakeholders?
- What are the best practices to address homelessness?

## **Methods and Rationale**

To answers our primary question, as well as our sub questions, we employ a literature review, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, and a policy analysis. Our literature review provides background and best practices by synthesizing research and case studies. We use quantitative data combined with qualitative data from service providers in order to describe homelessness in Burien. We use interviews to identify the perspectives of key stakeholders in the City of Burien. Our policy analysis uses information from the literature review and data collection to evaluate short-term measures as well as long-term strategies.

## **Organization of Report**

We have organized this report into four chapters.

- **First chapter** provides background information on homelessness. In particular, it defines the concept of homelessness and homeless people, discusses the causes of homelessness, and explores policy examples from other jurisdictions.
- **Second chapter** discusses the scope, trend, and demographics of homelessness, as well as the perspectives of key stakeholders in Burien. It provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of both the qualitative and quantitative data we have obtained from various sources.
- **Third chapter** is devoted to analyzing six short-term measures and evaluating them against three evaluative criteria: equity, feasibility, and effectiveness.
- **Fourth chapter** explores the medium to long-term strategies that are available to the city to mitigate the issues around homelessness.

## Chapter 1: Background

### The Conceptual Understanding of Homelessness

The definitions and usage of the term 'homelessness' and the people who refer to as 'homeless' have never been consistent and are subject to different interpretations (Gaetz, 2004; Roy & Hurtubise, 2007). It's striking to see the different ways the term homelessness has been used by politicians, service providers, the media, and researchers to refer to various situations that range from lack of housing to designate a range of social problems such as poverty, mental illness, addiction, joblessness (Hopper and Baumohl, 1996, p. 3).

The following statement by Jameshid Momeni, *albeit dated*, points not only to the slipperiness of the definition, but also how motivation affects the way homelessness is defined.

Sometimes homelessness is defined as a simple absence of shelter; sometimes it refers to people who are trapped in or have chosen a deviant life-style. Social service agencies and government researchers tend to define homelessness in line with their own objectives, political orientation, or traditions. Most of the definitions, or the elaborations of them, points to the homeless as dislodged, marginal, multi-problem people. Some definitions seem designed to minimize the scale of the problem of homelessness (Momeni, 1989, p.1).

The term homelessness has become a catch-all term for a host of serious social and economic policy failures since the 1980s, when the issue started to surface for the first time. While some people still tend to argue that homelessness is an individual problem and tend to blame it on the homeless people themselves, the overwhelming opinion considers homelessness as the "natural outcome of the way we have organized our housing system, and the way we allocate or fail to allocate income and support services when they are desperately needed" (J. David Hulchanski et al., 2009, 8). The following observation captures the complex socio-economic problems the term 'homelessness' has been used to conceal, and the need for policy makers to focus on the causes, not the effect.

By hiding a broad set of socially undesirable outcomes under the rubric of homelessness, society can recognize and condemn the undesirable social outcome we call homelessness. No one I know of is in favour of homelessness. But simply condemning the problem while at the same time not doing anything to change the social dynamics that produce the undesirable outcomes, means that things will stay the same – or get worse (J. David Hulchanski et al., 2009, 9)

### Who is Homeless?

There is hardly any conclusive answer to this question mainly for lack of a single definition. In the early 1980s, no two researchers or advocates could agree on the size and nature of the homeless population. Since 1990s, however, some common understanding started to emerge about the people who should be considered homeless. The Department of Education and Department of Housing and Urban Development defined homelessness, for the first time, to include both those that are literally homeless (live in the street and shelter), and those that are



at imminent risk of literal homelessness (those who would fall into literal homelessness should their current precarious housing arrangements fail) (Jim Baumohl, 1996, 17).

Currently, the Department of Education's definition, as expanded by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act, and the HUD definition remain to be the two main definitions of homelessness used by the federal government, its agencies and programs. Both definitions have a common language that defines homeless people as those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, a homeless person, regardless of age, meets one or more of the following conditions:

- Lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence
- Sleeps in a public or private place not meant or typically used for human habitation, such as cars, parks, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, airports or camping grounds
- Resides in a shelter or other time-limited housing program
- Resides in a hotel or motel with public or private assistance
- Has and will continue to experience long-term housing instability, including frequent moves and staying with family or friends

Homelessness, as shown above, is a complex social problem precipitated by economic and social factors such as poverty, lack of affordable housing, physical and mental health, addictions, and community and family breakdown. These underlying factors, in varying combinations, contribute to duration, frequency, and type of homelessness (Mago, Morden, and et al., 2013, 1). Accordingly, there are three main types of homeless people<sup>2</sup>.

- Episodic/Cyclical – this is when a person or family falls in and out of homelessness. This is often the case with people who experience mental health and chemical dependency issues.
- Transitional/Situational - A person or family who is forced into homelessness relatively for a short period of time due to a housing, healthcare or financial crisis following a sudden job loss, property loss or loss of income earner such as father or husband or wife.
- Chronic - These people have been homeless for more than a year, or four times in the last three years. They usually lack the resources to modify their situation and often suffer from mental health issues.

In sum, there is no single definition for homeless people and it remains a challenge as states, agencies, service providers, and advocates use slightly different definitions from each other.

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<sup>1</sup> A fixed residence is one that is stationary, permanent, and not subject to change. A regular residence is one that is used on a regular (i.e., nightly) basis. An adequate residence is one that is sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments. According to the McKinney Act, individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate residence are considered homeless.

<sup>2</sup> The US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and The National Coalition for the Homeless.

The differences in definition could make it difficult to quantify the number of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, create policies that will effectively manage the problem, pursue funding sources, and measure program outcomes. As much as having a common understanding of who should qualify as homeless is important in designing interventions, it is equally imperative to avoid lumping together people who do not share the same problem other than being homeless. A carefully designed intervention strategy should, therefore, focus on a distinct group of homeless people with a shared problem such as homeless women, the youth, veterans, the mentally ill, chronically homeless, or on specific common themes of public policies implicated in homelessness such as housing, justice and the health system.

## Causes of Homelessness

Homelessness is a complex problem which is influenced by multiple forces. This makes it difficult to point to a particular cause of homelessness because it is generated by the interaction of different forces. In this section, we will attempt to provide a broad understanding of homelessness by discussing the influence of three forces: economic, social, and structural.

### *Economic Forces*

The simplest explanation of homelessness is that people are homeless because they cannot afford to house themselves. Economic analyses of the problem identify the cause of homelessness to be the interaction between housing prices, income, and the health of housing markets. If there is a relatively high price of housing compared to people's income, then more people will be unable to afford to house themselves. Additionally, if there are few vacancies in the housing market it will be more difficult for individuals to find appropriate housing and more people will be homeless.

Quigley and Raphael tested this argument with regression analysis and found that these economic forces do seem to influence homelessness (2002). More recent work has looked beyond the influence of general economic forces (distribution of income, housing price, and market efficiency) and investigated the effect of economic shocks. In this instance, economic shocks refer to sudden changes in income, wealth, or costs. An example of an economic shock would be the birth of a baby. A family or individual may be making enough to maintain their housing, but they may still be at risk of homelessness if they are exposed to an economic shock if they do not have assets to buffer them against that sudden change. People at greatest risk of homelessness from economic shock would be families with a single earner, people who don't have stable income, and people without assets. (Curtis, et. al, 2013)

### *Social Forces*

Social forces describe a broad range of factors that influence individuals from mental health to class. It is not difficult to identify a single social force that appears to have an influence on

homelessness, but identifying these different factors individually does not provide a useful understanding of the general influence of social factors on homelessness unless that can be tied systematically. A robust theory is needed to effectively understand this force.

Recent research has focused on developmental theory as a social explanation of homelessness. This theory and research points to adverse experiences in childhood as strong influences on later life outcomes like homelessness spells and related outcomes like substance abuse. Childhood is a sensitive period where individuals develop through increasingly complex interactions with adults in a stable environment. Development in childhood provides individuals with the abilities to cope with the difficulties they will face later in life. Adverse experiences in childhood retards individual development and puts people at greater risk of poor later life outcomes (Cutuli, et. al, 2013).

### *Structural Forces*

Structural forces, like social forces, could be interpreted to mean a wide range of different influences. A limited understanding of structural forces could just look at the force of public institutions on homelessness. There is a large amount of interaction between homeless individuals and large public institutions such as foster care, prisons, shelters, and mental health facilities.

A qualitative study by Hopper et. al followed a group of severely mentally ill, chronically homeless individuals for five years and found that they spent on average 60% of their time living in different institutions. Authors describe this as an “institutional circuit” because the subjects move back and forth between institutions. (1997) Institutional circuiting is troubling because it suggests that institutions are failing to transition people out of institutional care or into appropriate institutional care.

Prison and the foster care system are both structured to exit individuals from institutional care. At the end of their sentence, prisoners are released and at the age of 18 the majority of foster children no longer qualify for foster care service. Reentry must be a focus of these systems in order to avoid institutional circuiting from these systems into other institutions or homelessness. In the case of the prison system, reentry is inhibited by a handful of factors. Criminal stigma may inhibit former prisoners from finding employment and housing. Serving time in prison economically disadvantages prisoners by preventing them from holding a job during that period. Additionally, legal barriers may prevent prisoners from accessing housing or income support services usually offered to people with few resources. (Metraux, et. al, 2008)

### *Intersection of Forces*

While this discussion has described these forces as distinct, there are clear interactions between economic, social, and structural forces. One specific example of this is the birth of a child causing an economic shock to a family. The economic shock influences the developmental

context in which that child is raised. In this scenario and many more, economic and social forces are intimately tied.

### *Intergenerational Transmission*

Both the economic and social arguments discussed provide specific avenues for intergenerational transmission of homelessness risk. The economic transmission of risk is fairly simple. Wealth is accumulated by individuals over their life and can easily be stored and transferred to their offspring in the form of assets. Socially, this risk can be transmitted because development of a child hinges on the interactions with the adults around the child. If these adults themselves were exposed to adverse experiences and their childhood development was inhibited, then they will be less equipped to provide positive experiences and protection from adverse experience. Again, there is clear interaction between these social and economic forces as there is a certain amount of fungibility between social and economic capital because development is based on interactions in a stable environment. In other words, economic security can help hedge against adverse childhood experiences by providing stable housing. (Kogel, et al, 1995)

## **Policy Examples**

Homelessness is not a new problem and over the years there have been various types of approaches invoked to deal with the issue. Because homelessness is a highly complex issue with many factors affecting people differently, most of these options are reactive in nature in that they address the issue downstream once homelessness has already occurred. Some of the major approaches are discussed below.

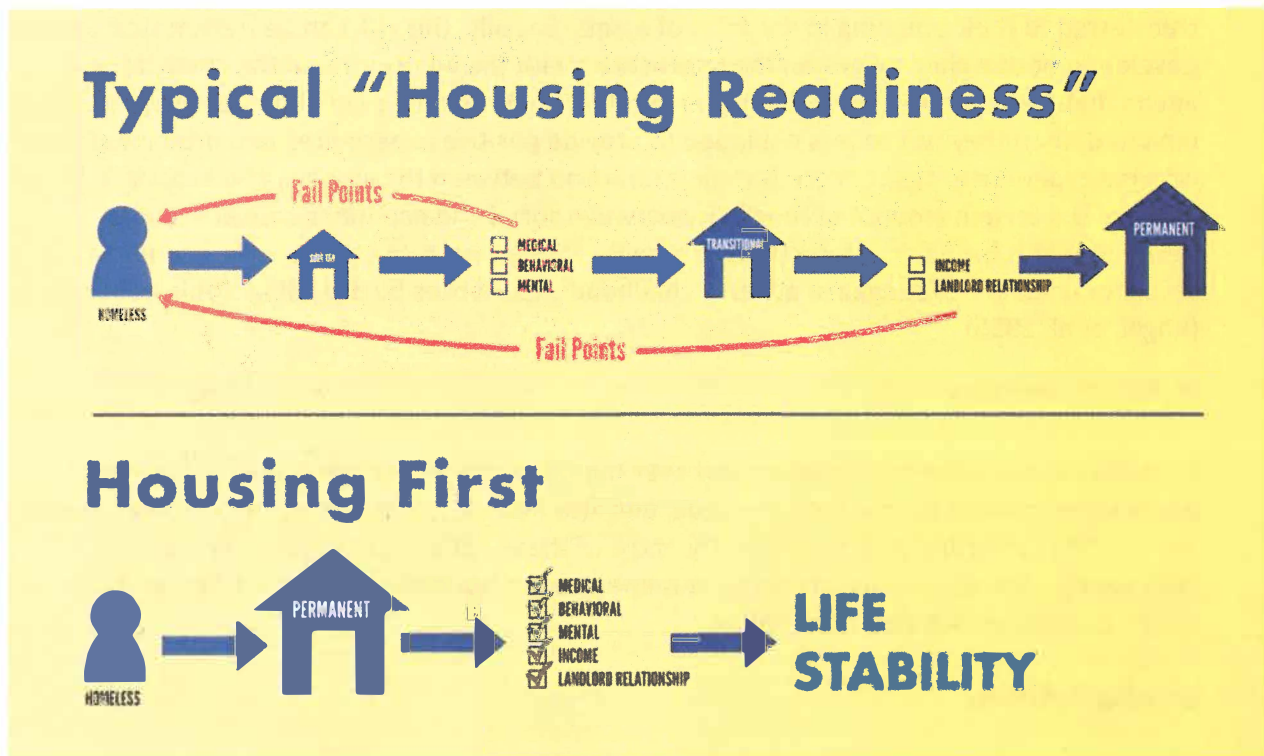
### *Housing Readiness*

The housing readiness approach is the traditional model that has been used to combat homelessness. Within this framework, individuals are passed through various levels of services and housing, culminating in permanent and independent housing. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development identifies four critical components of this approach: outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing ("Fact Sheet: What Is a Continuum of Care?," 2015). As participants enter the program, they must receive the necessary services and complete treatments before they can move on to the next level. The idea behind this model is that once a person is mentally and physically stable, they will be in a position to translate this steadiness into stable housing. This approach necessitates a continuum of care that involves several actors throughout the process.

### *Housing First Model*

The housing first model has received ample media coverage in the last few years. Much of this attention has been focused around the state of Utah, who through a housing first approach has

reduced its chronic homelessness population by an astounding 72% in the last ten years (Day et al., 2014). This model is defined by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness as “offer[ing] individuals and families experiencing homelessness immediate access to permanent affordable or supportive housing.” As opposed to traditional housing readiness models, housing first has minimal, if any, preconditions prior to access to housing. This is based on the principle that individuals’ most urgent needs, such as housing, must first be met before other issues can properly be addressed. A visual depiction is displayed below.



Recent research points clearly to the merits of housing first. Studies have found that housing first strategies are associated with decreased jail time (Clifasefi, Malone, & Collins, 2013), reduced use of medical services (Mackelprang, Collins, & Clifasefi, 2014), and higher retention rates as opposed to traditional continuum of care programs (Groton, 2013).

Housing first also seems to be more cost efficient in the long term. An evaluation conducted on 1811 Eastlake, a housing first program in Seattle, Washington, found that program participants the year prior to participation had a median monthly cost of \$4,066 per person per month. These median monthly costs decreased by \$1,492 in the first 6 months of program participation and then another \$958 per month after 12 months of housing. The same study also found that compared to a waitlist control group, housing first participants’ total costs were \$2,449 lower per person per month (Larimer, 2009).

Housing first policies typically target the chronically homeless, which generally make up a small percentage of total homeless populations. However, the chronic homeless population consumes the lion's share of homeless service resources. The state of Utah estimates that their chronic homeless population consumes 50% of available homeless-related resources and that for every chronic homeless person housed, \$8,000 is saved by community homeless providers. This savings equates to being able to serve "2.4 temporarily homeless individuals through existing programs" (Day et al., 2014).

Housing first models are often separated into two categories: single site and scattered-site housing. In single-site housing, or project-based housing, residents are housed all in one building. This has an advantage of outside services being made readily available and easily accessible. Scattered sites often use some sort of rent subsidy to house participants in traditional leasing agreements. This approach has the advantage of integrating participants into a more normalized lifestyle and it does not concentrate poverty in the same ways as single-site housing.



## Chapter 2: Homelessness in Burien

### Quantitative Data

In order to provide some description of the homeless population of Burien and attempt to answer specific questions from the city, we have accessed multiple sources of data: school district McKinney-Vento counts of homeless students, SafeHarbors shelter database, and national point in time counts. From any single one of these sources we cannot assemble a complete picture of Burien's homeless, but by accessing all sources we can assemble a partial image.

#### *School District Data*

Since the 07-08 school year, the proportion of WA students who are homeless has been increasing. The proportion of students who are homeless in Highline School District<sup>3</sup> (SD) has been greater than the WA average every school year since 07-08. Over this period, Renton and Federal Way SDs have had proportions of homeless students that were not statistically different from the WA state average except for the 11-12 and 12-13 school years where Federal Way SD had a proportion statistically less than the WA state average.

Student Homelessness Rate			
	Highline SD	Renton SD	Federal Way SD
2007-2008	3.16%*	1.81%	1.39%
2008-2009	2.96%*	2.34%	1.37%
2009-2010	3.42%*	1.84%	1.30%
2010-2011	4.23%*	2.20%	1.52%
2011-2012	4.71%*	2.37%	1.24%**
2012-2013	5.04%*	2.94%	1.35%*

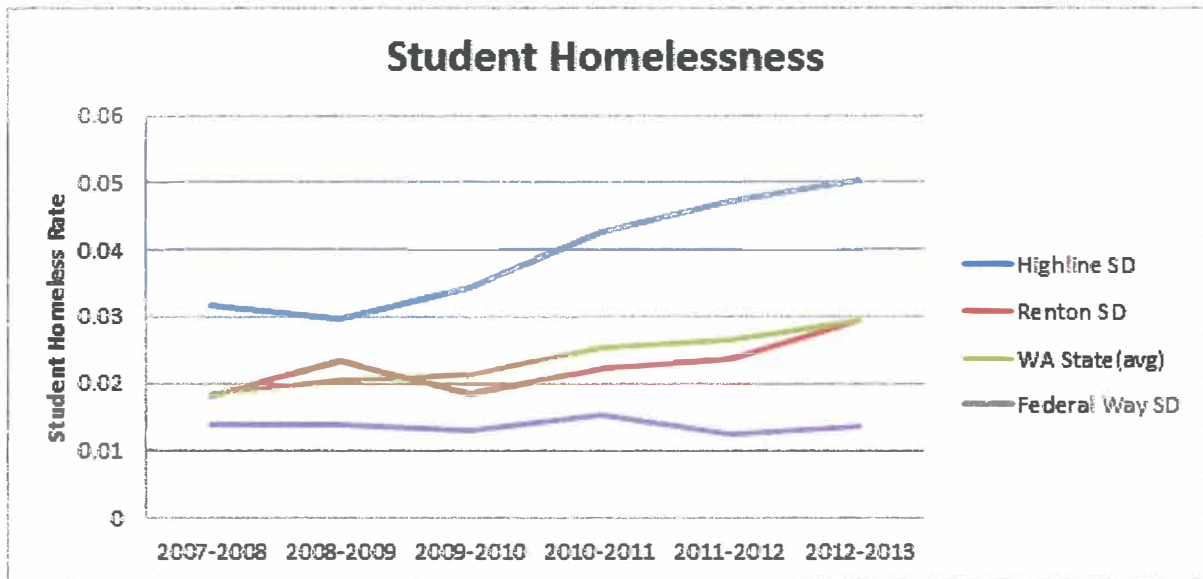
\* Indicates Significantly Different from State avg. at  $\alpha$  .05

\*\* Indicates Significantly Different from State avg. at  $\alpha$  .10

The following graph illustrates the different rates of student homelessness by school districts. The trend across all districts aside from Federal Way appears to be positive. As just discussed, the trend for Highline SD is statistically different from the state average.

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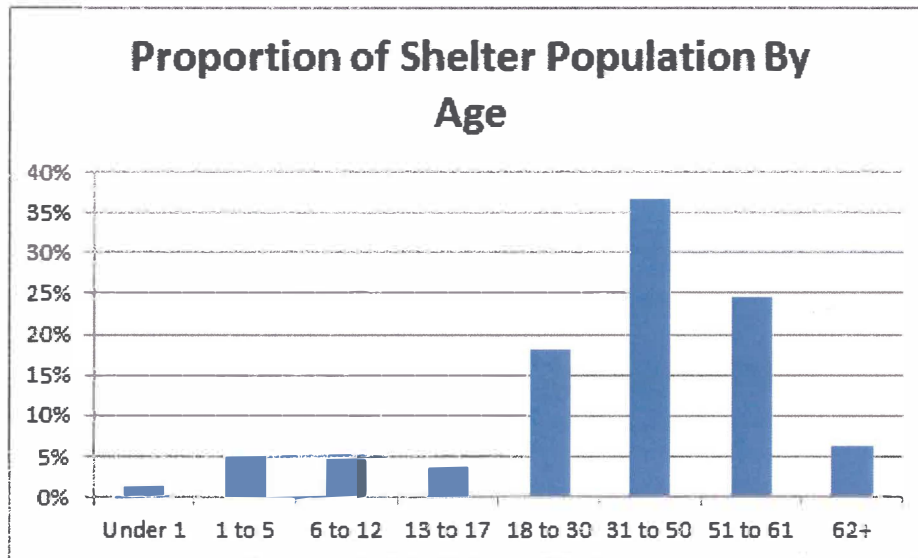
<sup>3</sup> The Highline School District is home to Burien public schools, as well as schools in the surrounding communities of Des Moines, Normandy Park, SeaTac, and White Center.



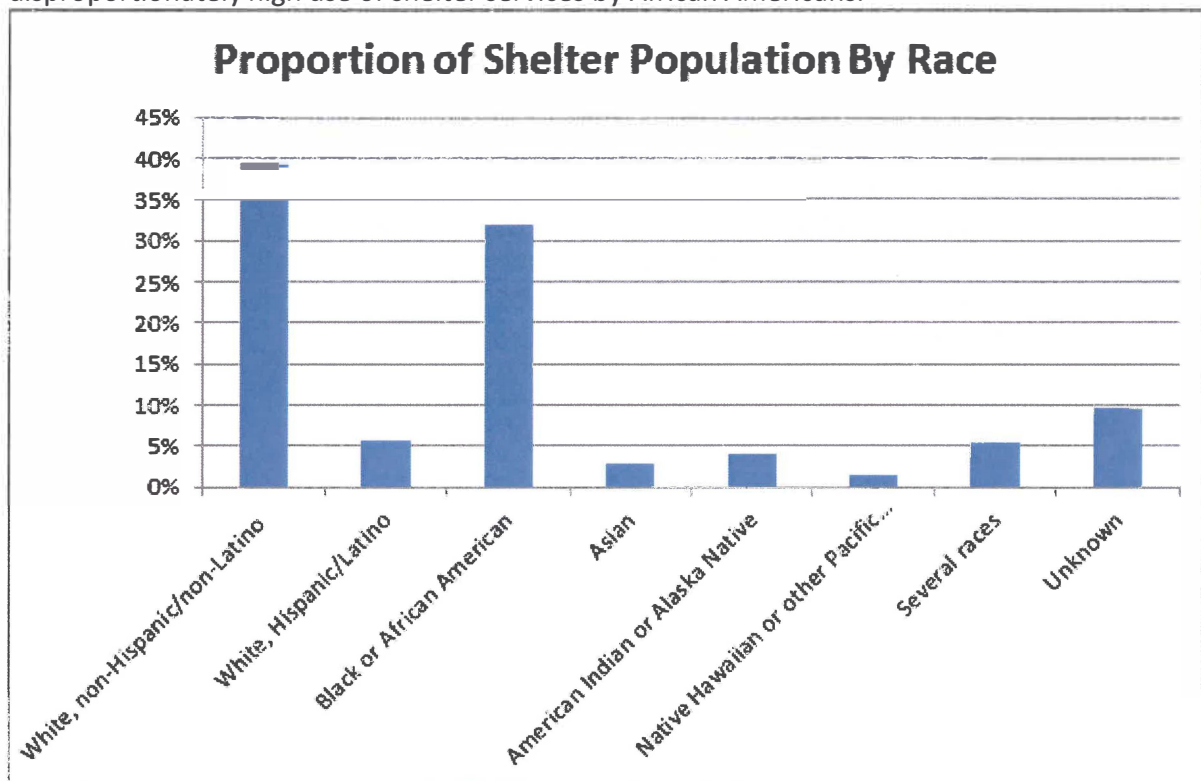
#### *SafeHarbors Data*

SafeHarbors aggregates data from King county shelters for the national homeless information system. This data can suggest some answers to questions the city has about the local homeless population such as who is homeless and where are they from. This information only pertains to homeless individuals who access shelter services so it cannot provide complete answers to these questions.

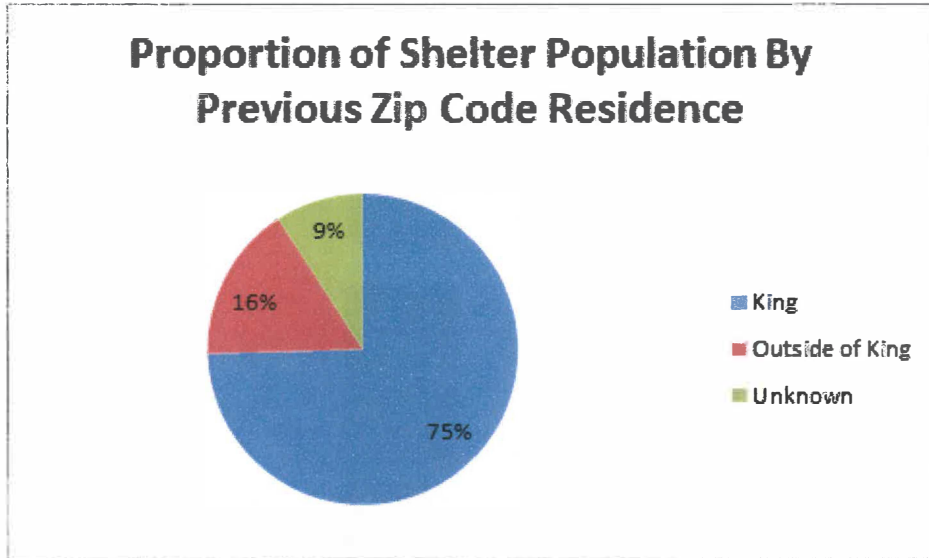
The majority of people who access shelter services in King County are 31 years or older. Youth up to the age of 17 only make up about 15% of individuals who access shelters. This should be viewed cautiously as it may just reflect a lack of available youth shelters, and not a description of youth homelessness.



Most people who access shelters in King County are White, non-Hispanics. The next most common group of people to access shelters in King County are African Americans who make up more than 30% of the people who access shelters in King County. This seems to clearly indicate disproportionately high use of shelter services by African Americans.



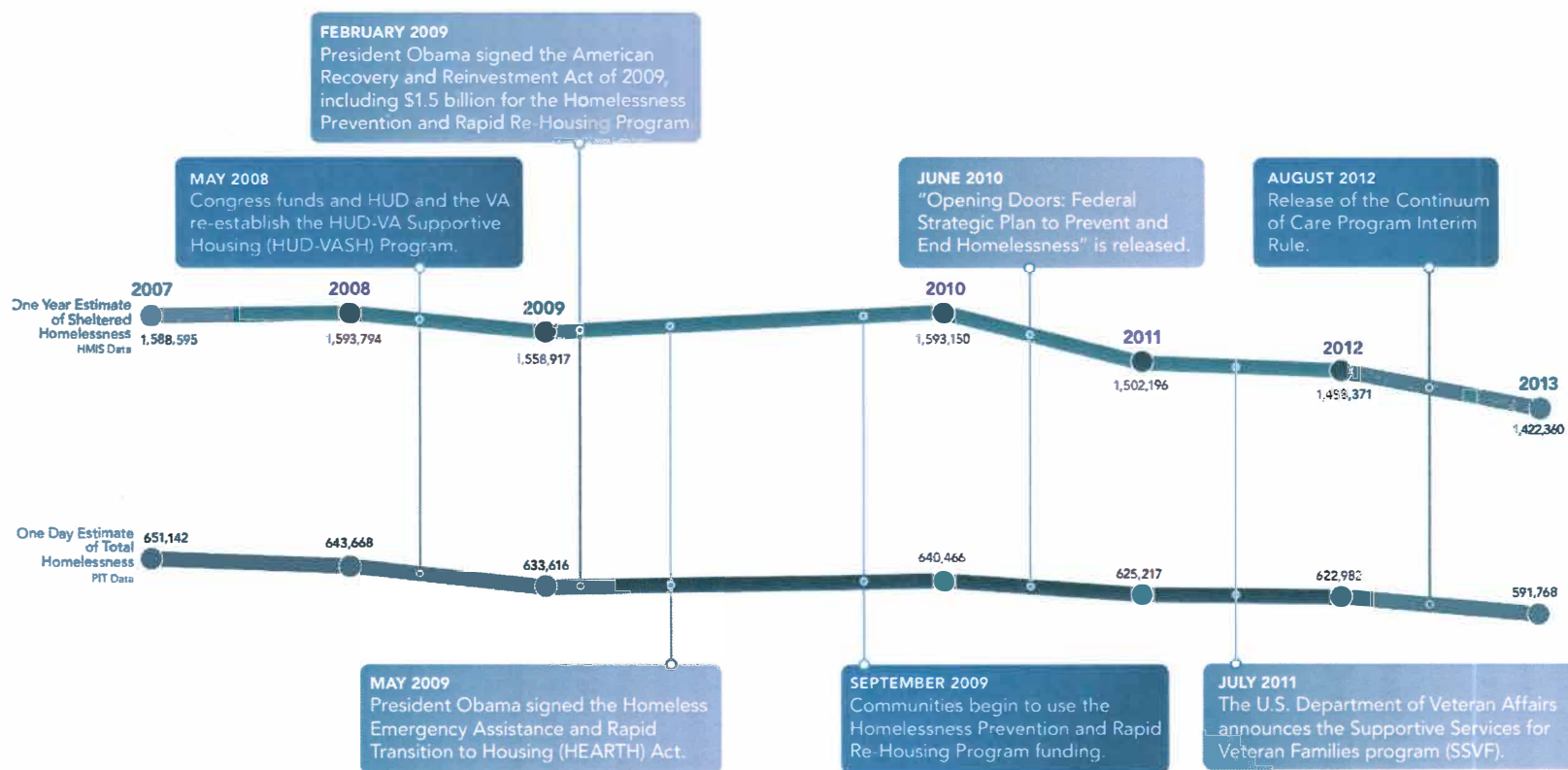
The majority of people who access shelters in King County are from King County. Only 16%-25% of people who access shelters in the county have zip codes from outside of the county. In contrast to the common opinion we heard expressed throughout our research, this suggests current trends in homelessness are not primarily driven by migration of vagrant populations.



#### *National Data*

Data at the national level is constructed from a combination of point-in-time counts from across the country as well as aggregation of data shelter's homeless information systems like SafeHarbors. The following infographic illustrates that the national trend since 2007 has been decreasing numbers of people experiencing homelessness. This trend is in contrast with the trend observed at the school district level. One possible explanation of this provided by the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is that the increase in homeless students seen in the data may be a reflection of improved data quality (Dryer, 2015). With the information available it is difficult to know with much certainty which trend is more accurate.

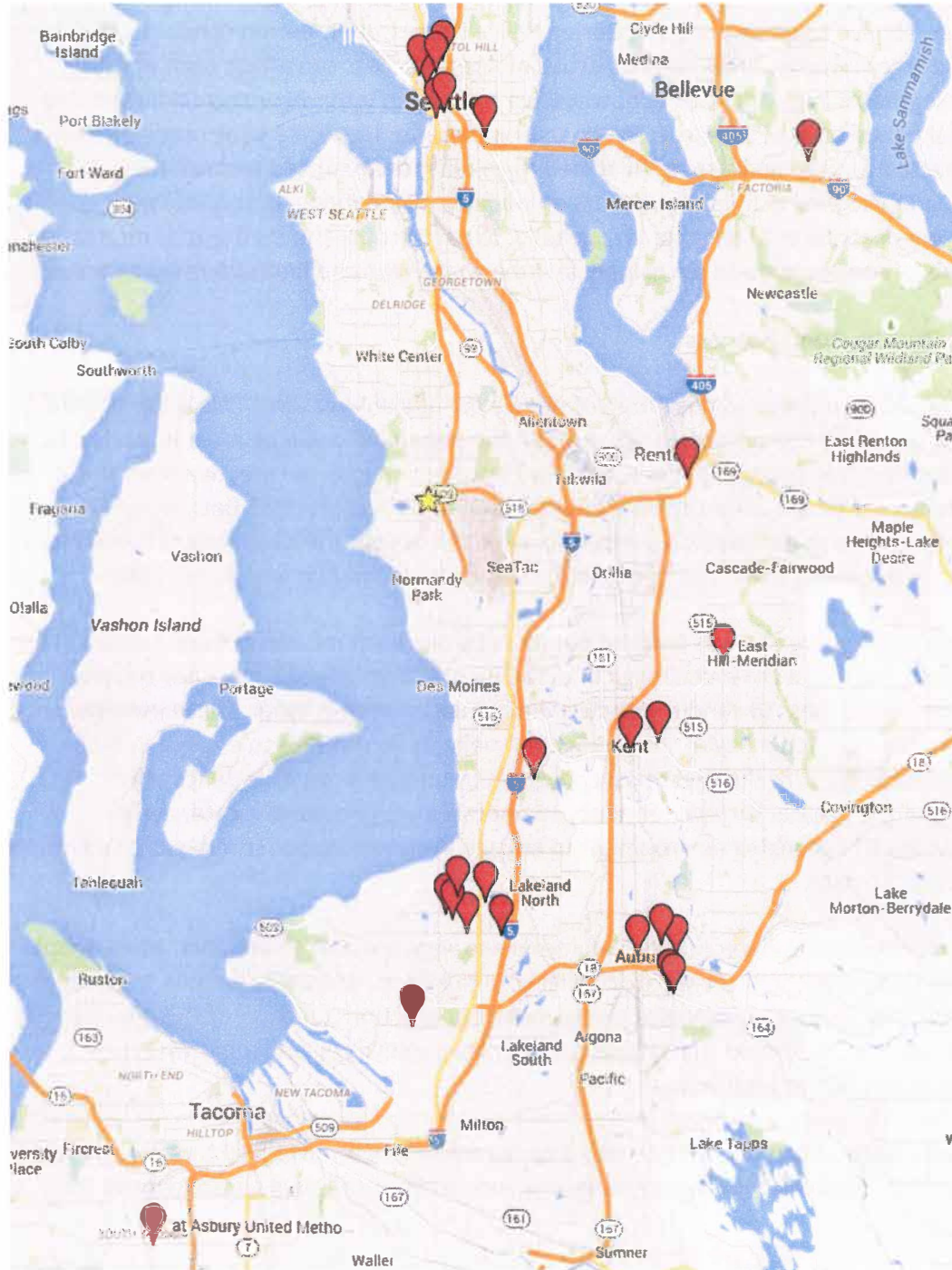
# PIT & HMIS 2007-2013



(Solari et. al, 2013)

## Services in Burien

While we were conducting our project the city of Federal Way investigated the distribution of shelter and hygiene services in King County. The following map displays their findings visually.





## Qualitative Data

In our efforts to better understand the many complex issues of homelessness in Burien and the surrounding region, we identified key stakeholder segments that are affected to varying degrees by these issues. These stakeholder segments include people experiencing homelessness, service organizations, the Burien Police Department, Burien residents, and the Burien business community. Knowing that issues of homelessness can affect each of these stakeholder segments in a wide variety of ways, we conducted interviews to gain insight into their personal perspective of the issue. By discussing these topics with a wide range of people who are impacted to varying degrees, we aimed to gain a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the effects of homelessness on multiple populations. In the following subsections, we describe our rationale for speaking to each group, the methods of interaction, the new levels of comprehension we gained, and the challenges and limitations we incurred.

### People Experiencing Homelessness

*Rationale:* We chose to speak to this group of people for obvious reasons. This is the population that is most affected by these issues. They are also the people who will be most impacted by any policy adoption. We thought it was especially important to gain perspective from these individuals because this disenfranchised group has limited political capital. Because of this, their voices are seldom heard and any policy adopted, even those with their best interest in mind, may fall short in capturing their true needs without their participation and perspective.

*Challenges and Limitations:* As was pointed out to us by outreach members from Auburn Youth Resources (AYR), there is a great challenge in obtaining the trust needed for many people experiencing homelessness to candidly discuss their situation. Often times, these individuals have had negative interactions with the public that make them hesitant to engage in such discussions. This, along with the severe psychological trauma one can experience when unsheltered and the natural societal tendency to not talk about personal matters with strangers, creates a challenging environment to engage in conversations where we could obtain valuable qualitative data.

Another limitation was the sheer number of interviews we were able to conduct. Most people who attended these meal services were not willing to talk to us, but we were able to conduct four interviews with unique members of the homeless population. Because of this small level of participation, any data collected from these testimonies is anecdotal and in no way generalizable to any bigger population.

Finally, the voluntary nature of the interview process creates an atmosphere that contributes to selection bias. This again disallows us to make any sort of representative conclusions in the information we receive.

Given our time, resources, and geographical constraints, we were unable to do much to mitigate these challenges and limitations. Still, we believe that the information gathered gave us a valuable perspective and we were able to gain much needed insight into the perspectives of this population.

*Method of Interaction:* Representatives from AYR, who engage with homeless individuals on a regular basis, recommended to us that we set up a table during a meal service at Transform Burien, a local coalition of churches that serves weekly hot meals. With this interview set up, individuals could voluntarily engage with us in an unintimidating environment and on their own terms. Through this, we were able to interview four individuals in varying stages of homelessness. During these open-ended conversations we learned of their personal experiences and the greatest challenges they face on a daily basis. We also got a glimpse into their specific needs and of the service areas that are most lacking in the area.

We also unexpectedly were able to have a conversation with a formerly homeless individual now employed with the Union Gospel Mission in Seattle. After our presentation to the City Council at the Homelessness Study Session, this individual and his coworker approached us to talk both about our research and their own work through the Union Gospel Mission. During the conversation, this individual brought up his own experiences with homelessness and talked about tent encampments and designated car camping areas. His unique intersection of being formerly homeless and currently employed by a service provider offered a rare viewpoint on these specific issues.

*What We Learned:* For privacy reasons and for ease of discussion, we have given fictitious names to our homeless interviewees. Throughout this section we refer to them as Alan, Ben, Charles, and Dave. The following table displays some general demographic information.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Estimated Age</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Residency</u>	<u>Type of Homelessness</u>
Alan	Male	late 50s - early 60s	Caucasian	Burien	Chronic
Ben	Male	mid 40s	Caucasian	Burien	Chronic
Charles	Male	early 20s	Caucasian	Burien	Situational
Dave	Male	mid 40s	Caucasian	Burien	Chronic

Three of the four people we interviewed at Transform Burien (Alan, Ben, and Dave) displayed signs of chronic homelessness. Though each of these three had described brief periods of housing and employment, these were individuals that have been homeless for years and have very little resources, opportunities, or sometimes will to change their current unsheltered state. Charles, the youngest person we interviewed, had undisclosed conflicts with his family causing him to leave their home. Since then he had trouble finding permanent employment which kept

him on the street. Charles currently finds work through a temporary work agency where his jobs are almost always construction related.

When asked to describe what types of services were lacking in Burien, a unanimous response was a place to shower. Individuals described having to travel long distances in order to find a place offering a shower. Charles described this as a great challenge that he faces every day. With Charles working construction jobs, as available, he puts in long hours of hard manual labor in a dirty environment. When he gets off work, he is exhausted, caked in sweat and dirt, and usually quite far from any shower. This often leads to him going days without showering or trying to clean up in public restrooms until he can make the journey to a shower. He understands why establishments do not want him cleaning up in their restroom and he indicated that he preferred if he did not have to do so. When he does shower, he often will have to pay bus fare to travel to the showering station, costing him money that could otherwise be spent on food or saved toward a place of his own. The lack of hygiene services also impacts employment. Because of the challenges faced for remaining clean, Charles will often only qualify for construction jobs at the temporary employment agency, which perpetuates the cleanliness cycle he finds himself in. This also hinders his ability to get permanent employment due to the hygienic factors during interviews.

Another consistent fact we found throughout our interviews was that they all viewed the police in a positive light. They indicated that law enforcement officers are only doing their job and they must respond to situations when people “make trouble.” They also explicitly distanced themselves from these troublemakers, but admit that they are present.

A third consistent element pertained to their personal property. Each interviewee told us of the challenges of keeping their personal items safe. Some told of stories of theft, while others gave examples of Washington Department of Transportation employees and police officers throwing their belongings in the garbage. Whether this was harassment, mistaking these items as trash, or because the items were in a restricted location is unclear. Charles told us it was especially troublesome when he went to work because he had to decide whether to burden himself by taking his belongings with him to work or taking a chance that his items would be where he left them when he returned. He indicated that having some sort of locker would greatly help his situation.

There were other topics of discussion that were not consistent among multiple interviewees, but were interesting to us. One of these was a challenge that Charles faced. He described how having no kitchen or place to cook food severely limits what food he can purchase. He told us he is forced to buy more expensive processed foods because there is no need for cooking and is easily prepared. He said he knows he could more efficiently spend his money and eat healthier, but he is left with little choice. Dave was a confident man that had a sense of mastery in his homeless experience. He described his adamancy of being on his own and not part of any governing body like a tent encampment. Though he had friends, as was indicated by his numerous conversations with other individuals passing by to get a warm meal, Dave described

how he preferred to live in the woods away from others. Though not conclusive, his descriptions hinted at this being a chosen lifestyle and a possible example where no policy intervention would alleviate his situation.

## **Service Organizations**

*Rationale:* Service organizations play a major part in homelessness-related issues. These organizations provide a vast array of services to the homeless population. Because of their direct contact with these populations, service organizations can offer unique perspectives on the experiences and needs of people experiencing homelessness. These organizations can be connected networks which allow them to have a better understanding of the specific services that are lacking in the area. These organizations are also invested in the outcomes of homeless individuals, making them more willing to participate and assist in our data gathering objectives.

*Challenges and Limitations:* One challenge we faced was the limited number of services organizations present within Burien itself. Because of this, we had to rely only on the few unique perspectives within Burien, as well as reach out to organizations in neighboring areas whose experiences may not translate perfectly to the realities of Burien. A final limitation was the limited responses. In two unique situations (one email and one telephone call), organizations did not respond or chose not to participate in our inquiries.

*Method of Interaction:* Data collection for this stakeholder group consisted of a combination of in-person interviews, email questionnaires, open-ended conversations, and telephone calls. We met with members of Transform Burien on two occasions to ask about their work and gain understanding of their perspective of the issues. There were specific prompts that we used to guide the conversation at times, but the majority of each interview was open-ended which allowed the conversation to flow naturally.

We also reached out to the Committee to End Homelessness (CEH), who describes themselves as “a broad coalition of government, business, faith communities, nonprofits, and homeless advocates working together to implement the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County.” Three attempts to contact them, twice through telephone calls and once via email, did not result in any quality data. One phone call was with a lower-level employee who did not have much information, while the other two contacts were directed to an Executive team member who unfortunately did not respond. We were, however, able to engage in a quality email questionnaire with the Executive Director (ED) of Kent Youth Services who is also a member of CEH.

We also communicated with AYR on multiple occasions. This communication included meetings with the Burien City Manager’s Office, casual conversations, and an email questionnaire. We discussed homelessness-related issues with five AYR employees who engaged in four different areas of work within AYR.

*What We Learned:* AYR indicated that “there has been a general increase in the amount of youth that we connect to regionally”. Though they noted that it is impractical to give us a specific number, Burien had a high representation in the caseloads that they take on. This paints a bleak picture when coupled with the fact, as stated in the interview, that in Burien “there is a lack of nearly everything included in a ‘continuum of care’”. Though there is a significant lapse in available services, according to Kent Youth Services ED, the biggest resource missing within Burien is “political will and accompanying actual ‘action’ to create and sustain adequate/affordable housing.”

Another casual, unsolicited conversation we had with an employee at the Union Gospel Mission in Seattle gave us a little insight into safe areas designated to car camping. This employee, who is a case manager, declared that he often times has a hard time finding his clients for repeated interactions because they are constantly being told to move along or they have elected to move around for safety reasons. From his standpoint, designated car camp areas provide two positives. First, it is a safe place to park overnight without the worry of being told to move along in the middle of the night. Second, with car campers returning to the camp lot night after night, he is able to continually make contact with his clients and connect them with the services that they need.

### **Burien Police Department**

*Rationale:* We decided to gain police perspective because they are often times the first contact with people experiencing homelessness. Whether this is responding to resident complaints, addressing criminal activities, or encountering homeless individuals on their patrol, police officers can offer a unique perspective of the complex web of issues surrounding homelessness.

*Challenges and Limitations:* Because there is no hard data available for law enforcement interactions involving the homeless population, we were limited to discussing perspectives from individual officers. These interviews produced solid insight, but they were subject to personal experience and not necessarily generalizable to any larger group. We were also limited to interviews with higher ranking officers (Chief, Captain, and Sergeant) and were unable to interview officers who interact with homeless populations more frequently.

*Method of Interaction:* Obtaining qualitative data from this stakeholder consisted of in-person interviews, joint meetings with the Burien City Manager’s Office, and attending a loss prevention presentation put on by the Burien Police Department and Discover Burien. Through these interactions, we gained the insights from three different officers in varying levels of management. These included Police Chief K. Scott Kimerer, Captain Bryan Howard, and Sergeant Henry McLauchlan.

*What We Learned:* The officers we talked to had much to say about the issues of homelessness in Burien. They found themselves in a tough spot because they recognize that much of what is

in their power to do does not help alleviate the situation of homelessness. The Sergeant described it as “squeezing a balloon.” All that is done when you squeeze in the middle is displace the air inside to someplace else. They saw much of what they had to do as pushing individuals from one place and situation to another without addressing the root issues. On the other hand, it is their duty to respond to situations that are against the law or that residents view as suspicious.

No homeless-specific data is collected by the police department, but they perceived that homelessness issues became more recognized once the new City Hall was built, which shares a building with a library and is located next to a park. This makes sense as parks and libraries offer things that homeless individuals cannot find elsewhere such as access to computers, the internet, books, and public space. Astonishingly, the Captain and the Sergeant estimated that 20-30% of officers’ time is spent on homelessness-related issues (crime, resident complaints, safety issues, etc.).

Another issue they highlighted is the recent spike in heroin use. This has been seen in both homeless and housed residents and is consistent with state and county heroin trends.

### **Burien Business Community**

*Rationale:* Recently, there has been a small outspoken group of business owners who have become critics of the current methods of addressing the issues of homelessness. These concerns stem from situations that have arisen which have negative impacts on their businesses. This outspoken voice, along with other issues, led the City Council to pass a controversial trespassing ordinance that has garnered nationwide headlines and a lawsuit from the American Civil Liberties Union. Critics claim it targets homeless individuals and in effect criminalizes homelessness. Proponents claim that it gives local law enforcement a much needed tool to respond to community concerns. This ordinance’s wording has since been amended to alleviate some of the targeting concerns raised by critics.

*Method of Interaction:* We attempted to receive input from the business community from three unique methods. First, we interviewed Discover Burien, a business oriented service organization whose mission is to “create and sustain a vibrant economy and dynamic community through promotion and education” (Discover Burien Website). Their work is similar to a local chamber of commerce. Second, we developed a survey to send out to members of Discover Burien to get their unique perspectives on issues relating to their businesses and homelessness. Third, we attended a newly formed series of presentations that brings local business leaders and the Burien police department together to discuss crime as it relates to the business community. Finally, we attended and watched videos of past City Council meetings where members of the business community gave public comment on homelessness issues.

*Challenges and Limitations:* This stakeholder group presented a number of limitations and challenges throughout our research. First, our interview with Discover Burien produced great



insight into their own perspective, but they were hesitant to generalize what they were saying to the greater Burien business community. Second, the presentation we attended with business leaders and law enforcement unfortunately did not have much to do about homelessness issues. Finally, and most significantly, Discover Burien and Burien City officials jointly decided to not issue us the contact information that we needed to administer the survey. Because of these challenges, our valuable data is limited to Discover Burien's perspective and the few vocal business owners that gave public comment at City Council meetings. Thus, our data is not generalizable to the greater Burien business community.

*What We Learned:* Through our interview with Discover Burien, we gained insight into how homelessness is perceived from one stakeholder group. They indicated that they have seen an upward trend of homeless over the last couple of years. We were told that there have been a few incidents that initiated a handful of business owners to become vocal about homelessness issues and how they relate to their business and overall quality of life as a resident of Burien. This has also been demonstrated in public comment sections of past City Council meetings. A few ideas Discover Burien suggested was for the City to implement a more proactive communications arm, actively engage the public to bring people into public places like the park, and for a more open dialogue between the City, law enforcement, and the public. These suggestions could provide merit in developing more collaborative relationships among represented groups in Burien that could tackle issues like homelessness from a united front.

## Chapter 3: Short-term Option Analysis

In this section, we analyze short-term options to address a specific problem statement related to homelessness. We will use criteria to compare the options we discuss. We will conclude by highlighting the trade-offs between the different options.

### Problem Statement:

There is a perception that the City of Burien is experiencing an increase in people experiencing homelessness. This is creating conflicts over the use of public property such as parks and public facilities, and a mounting negative public perception of the homeless. The city is exploring effective solutions that address and mitigates the issues around homelessness.

Accordingly, we have identified policy options that will improve the situation of homeless people, and improve public perception.

### Major Stakeholders People Experiencing Homelessness, Service Organizations, Burien Police Department, Burien Residents, and Burien Business Community

Our assessment of this problem considered several major stakeholders that are affected by the issue of homelessness in the City of Burien. We have used different methods to get the perspectives of each major stakeholder which would help us not only make informed choices of proposed policy alternatives, but also prioritize the alternatives that most likely advance the mutual interests of all stakeholders. The major stakeholders include:

- People experiencing homelessness: We had interviews with four homeless people in the City of Burien.
- Service organizations: We had in-person meetings, and phone conversations; and administered written structured questionnaires with a number of homeless service providers operating both in the Burien and outside of Burien.
- The Burien Police Department: We had extended meetings with Burien Police Department officials to understand their interaction with homeless people.
- Burien residents and the Burien business community: We had hoped to conduct a survey of the business community, but due to the limitations on our time and resources were unable to. We also engaged in an interview with Discover Burien and observed the public comment section of City Council meetings.

### Criteria: Equity, feasibility, and Effectiveness

We used the following three main criteria for evaluating our proposals:

- **Equity:** Our solutions must be equitable to all major stakeholders. We evaluate the fairness of each proposal to advance the interests of all major stakeholders. No solution would be proposed that affects one stakeholder disproportionately. A solution that fairly advances the mutual interests of all stakeholders will have the upper hand.

- **Feasibility:** We considered the feasibility of policy options in cost and implementation. The policy option that is relatively easier to implement because it is efficient, with potential costs of programs weighed against the potential benefits; and there is political will to implement will have a higher chance to pass on the scale of feasibility.
- **Effectiveness.** We prioritized effective options that address the root causes of homelessness, help reduce conflict over the use of public space, and improve relationships among the residents of Burien City.

## Short-term Options

### Mobile Shower Unit

This option aims to help alleviate hygienic challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness. A mobile shower unit in Kent, WA is operated by Catholic Community Services (CCS), a nonprofit organization. This setup consists of two showers on the trailer where 6-8 men can sign up to use in the evening and 6-8 more in the morning. This unit is usually operated by one CCS staff person and requires a drain, hose, propane tank, and accessibility to water. Because of the inability to use these units in cold weather, CCS makes this shower unit available April to November. There are multiple variations to these units differing in numbers of shower stalls (up to 16) to additional amenities such as toilets and sinks.

A partnership, similar to Kent-CCS, would be ideal to implement this option. In Burien's case, the most likely partner would be a church or faith organization as they are the biggest private presence in homeless services in Burien. With the Kent template, Burien could easily implement this option if they were able to raise the funds to either purchase or rent a shower trailer. An added bonus is that the trailer is on wheels, which allows it to be moved to accommodate the needs/demand of people experiencing homelessness or if the host no longer wants to be involved.

### *Equity*

Mobile shower units are highly equitable for homeless populations. If adequately placed, a mobile shower could have a big impact on the day-to-day condition of people experiencing homelessness. A unanimous concern through our qualitative interviews with these individuals was the challenge of taking care of their personal hygiene. Providing free and convenient locations for showering could go a long way into producing a wide range of benefits for these people.

This option would also be fairly equitable for other residents in Burien. Some of the most vocalized issues that have arisen regarding homelessness have had to do with hygiene. A policy

that directly targets this concern could help alleviate some of these disturbances. Once upfront costs are met, the annual maintenance budget is very modest, allowing a mobile shower program to operate while minimizing any possible complaint of misuse of public funds from political opponents.

For the most part, this option's equity as it relates to the business community would be mostly neutral as this group of stakeholders does not stand to gain much from its implementation. An argument could be made for somewhat positive benefits for businesses, however. Though this would do nothing to alleviate loitering and panhandling complaints, cleaner folks outside of a store are likely to seem less threatening to overall business.

### *Feasibility*

This option is challenging to estimate costs given the various types of shower units that are available, as well as whether it is determined to lease or purchase. If partnering agencies provide their own volunteer to oversee the unit, any labor expense would be avoided. If this is not possible, we estimate that it would cost \$6,480 annually for labor<sup>4</sup>. The Kent-CCS mobile shower unit partnership allocates \$1,100 annually for insurance, tabs, and maintenance. This brings the annual costs to \$7,580. Upfront costs to purchase or lease a shower unit is not factored in to this estimate and would need to be considered to get a true range of cost.

The most challenging part of implementing this option would be finding a local partner that is willing to host the shower unit and oversee its operations. During one of our conversations with Transform Burien, they expressed their interest in hosting such a shower unit on their property. This would be a great partner because both of their close proximity to heavy homeless-traffic areas and their demonstrated effort to provide services to the local homeless population. Once a partnership has been established and a contract agreed upon, the remaining implementation and maintenance would be very easy.

### *Effectiveness*

A mobile shower unit would be pretty effective in reducing conflicts over the use of public spaces. Libraries and parks are frequented often by people experiencing homelessness. The city has a role in maintaining an environment that is friendly and conducive to all residents. This environment has come into question in the past year with complaints concerning odor in these gathering places. Providing access to a shower could easily alleviate some of this concern.

Short-term conditions would be greatly improved relative to the scope of the program. Being able to shower regularly can help people who find themselves unhoused in many ways including physical and psychological health gains, expense and time savings, and a better hiring

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<sup>4</sup> This estimate is based on 1 paid staff member working 12 hours per week (6 hours twice a week) from April to November at \$15 per hour.

potential for job-seeking individuals. This adds to short-term quality of life. Besides slightly increasing hireability, this option does not, however, do much to address the longer-term root causes of homelessness.

This option would be somewhat effective in improving relations between people in Burien. Mobile shower units give access to hygienic services that are otherwise difficult for homeless populations to get to. This in turn has the potential to mitigate some of the hygienic complaints made to City Council. This would also be a great public relations move considering the negative attention Burien has received both locally and nationally after its trespassing ordinance went into effect.

### Laundry Service Voucher

This option addresses one specific challenge of living unhoused: finding a place to wash your clothes. People living outside are constantly exposed to the elements which can quickly dirty their attire. Without the financial ability to wash clothes on a consistent basis, the hygienic practices of people experiencing homelessness can be frowned upon by some housed individuals. Some people resort to cleaning their clothes in restrooms where they have access to soap and water. Owners of both public and private buildings, however, disapprove of this practice and go to great lengths to put an end to it such as posting signs declaring that restrooms are for paying customers only and keeping the key to locked bathroom doors behind the counter.

An ideal temporary remedy for this condition would be for a service organization to provide washers and dryers to their clients on a weekly basis. Minimal such services exist in Burien, making this approach impractical. An additional action that can be taken is to provide some sort of voucher to wash clothes in a local laundromat. This would give people the freedom to wash their clothes at their own convenience and save the money they would normally spend on laundry. This voucher system would work best if the city partnered with willing local laundromats to implement this program. Vouchers could be distributed to local law enforcement, service organizations, and outreach representatives to give away at their discretion to those in need. This would work similar to how the Burien police are currently supplied with bus tickets to disperse as they see fit.

### *Equity*

Laundry vouchers would be equitable to the homeless population. Having a voucher allows them to not only keep their clothes clean, but also to wash them at their own discretion. This means that if any other opportunities or events come up that conflict with the times available for laundry service, they will not have to choose one over the other. Also, because free laundry service is limited in Burien, this would cut down on the travel time and expense to laundry services in other cities.

Other residents have been vocal about unhygienic individuals interfering with their own ability to enjoy public spaces. A laundry voucher system would begin to counter this concern by giving homeless individuals the chance to clean their clothes more regularly. Though some residents may see any money spent on aiding people experiencing homelessness as a waste of taxpayer funds, this system is slightly equitable to residents as a whole.

Some businesses could also stand to benefit from this policy. Partnered laundromats would get guaranteed sales through the city buying vouchers in bulk. Businesses located around parks, libraries, and other popular homeless hangouts may also see a cleaner population of people around their businesses. Businesses close to partnered laundromats, however, may see an increase in homeless traffic around their store, which may create some concerns. Businesses as a whole, however, would not see many positive nor negative outcomes from this program. Consequently, a laundry voucher system is fairly neutral for the business community when it comes to equity.

### *Feasibility*

The cost of this option is dependent on the scope of the program, but is a straightforward calculation. An average load of small load of laundry costs around \$3.50<sup>5</sup>. The annual estimated cost breakdown is demonstrated in the following table.

Laundry Service		Number of Participants			
Voucher		25	50	75	100
# of Loads	1	\$ 4,550	\$ 9,100	\$ 13,650	\$ 18,200
	2	\$ 9,100	\$ 18,200	\$ 27,300	\$ 36,400
	3	\$ 13,650	\$ 27,300	\$ 40,950	\$ 54,600
	4	\$ 18,200	\$ 36,400	\$ 54,600	\$ 72,800

As can be seen, this option could easily be scaled up or down depending on the demand for its use and available resources. Depending on arrangements made with participating laundromats, this scale adjustment could be done on a monthly or even weekly basis. This provides flexibility to appropriately adjust depending on ongoing assessment of the program.

A laundry voucher system would be pretty straightforward to implement. Once willing partners are established in the business community, there would be some administrative work involved in regularly purchasing the vouchers, distributing them to local law enforcement and service organizations, and keeping track of budgetary and coverage issues. This will add a little work to some public administration official, but all things considered this option is fairly easy to implement.

<sup>5</sup> Based on Burien Laundry prices at \$1 per load for the washer and 25 cents per 6 minutes for the dryer. A liberal estimate of 60 minutes of dryer time equates to a total average load cost of \$3.50.



## *Effectiveness*

A laundry voucher program could be somewhat effective in lowering conflicts over the use of public spaces. One concern residents have regarding public spaces is hygienic-related issues of people experiencing homelessness. One aspect of this is produced by wearing dirty clothes that may produce an unpleasant smell. Without placing a value judgement on this concern, laundry vouchers can be one way to alleviate some of these concerns from residents.

We project a laundry voucher system to be quite effective in improving the conditions that stem from homelessness. Clean clothes could make day-to-day life may be a bit more manageable. People experiencing homelessness would no longer need to make a choice about traveling great distances to clean their clothes or spending some of the limited money they have. They would probably make a more positive impression when searching for jobs and attending job interviews as well. This program, however, does nothing to address any root causes of homelessness and in effect is only a reactive measure that can be implemented downstream.

Laundry voucher systems could minimally improve relations among people in Burien by mitigating some of the hygienic concerns discussed earlier. Hygiene-related complaints could reduce and interactions between people experiencing homelessness and other residents may be made more cordial, but relations will probably not be affected in any drastic ways.

## **Public Lockers**

This option is meant to address the challenges people experiencing homelessness have in maintaining their personal belongings. Without a safe place to store their possessions, homeless individuals have to decide whether to haul all of their belongings with them everywhere they go or risk getting their things stolen or thrown away when they are not around. This produces many negative consequences including limiting mobility to medical treatment, case management appointments, and job interviews, as well as eliminating the possibility to stay in shelters that cannot accommodate the storage of personal belongings.

Implementing some source of access to storage could come in various forms. For example, in 2010, the Portland City Council initiated a temporary program that offers storage lockers to the homeless free of charge. The program used recycled shopping carts to offer 40 storage slots each day. This program was funded jointly by the City of Portland and the Portland Business Alliance. The cost for two paid staff positions and setup totaled \$38,000 -- \$30,000 from the city and \$8,000 from the Portland Business Alliance. The storage slots were accessible every day from 6:30 to 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. (Ruud, 2010).

There are many other forms of implementation for such storage programs. Some cities have installed actual lockers at sites, used 96 gallon curbside recycle bins, and used 30-quart plastic

storage totes as storage bins. Partnership opportunities with service organizations or churches to host these storage sites have occurred. Others cities choose to install freestanding lockers outside in public view.

### *Equity*

A storage locker program is equitable to people experiencing homelessness for a number of reasons. First, it is good for theft prevention. If a person is able to lock their possessions in a safe place, the opportunity of theft is eliminated or greatly reduced. Second, it increases mobility of homeless individuals, giving them the opportunity to travel free of their possessions to attend medical appointments, job interviews, case management services, and general day-to-day transportation. Third, it can potentially reduce the psychological stigma associated with homelessness due to outside perceptions. Carrying all of your belongings is a tell-tale sign of homelessness which can conjure up preconceptions that others make about these individuals. Without this overt sign of homelessness, people experiencing homelessness may bypass some of this potential stigma.

The majority of businesses and other residents may see some benefits from such a program as well. A storage program could help clean up the city sidewalks and public spaces such as parks. This cleanliness could enhance positive experiences in public spaces and mitigate some of the negative consequences of individuals on the streets near businesses. Pushback from residents and businesses near the storage facility may generate because of more homeless traffic around the storage facility. Strategic placement of the facility, such as in an area already high in homeless traffic, could help alleviate this drawback. Other residents may view this program, or any additional use of government funds, as a waste of taxpayer money.

### *Feasibility*

As has been demonstrated by many cities, a storage program for the homeless can be fairly easy to implement. Once the terms of storage are established and upfront costs are funded, the maintenance of a program is fairly low cost. Oversight of the facility and a staff member or volunteer would be necessary when the facility is open to the public. With the hours limited to a couple hours in the morning and night, staffing costs would be minimal. Still, there is opportunity here for partnerships with local churches and organizations that could staff the program and facility through volunteers. Upfront costs would depend on the number and type of storage locker chosen to use in the program. One advantage of having non-permanent traditional storage lockers is that they are mobile and able to be moved to another facility if it was needed.

### *Effectiveness*

Depending on the scope, a storage program would be fairly effective in lowering conflicts over the use of public space. Allowing people to store their personal belongings can help clean up public spaces and create a more enjoyable scenery for all residents.

The program's effectiveness in improving the overall condition of homeless individuals would be minimal at best. This reactive program does not target any of the root causes of homelessness and will not prevent future homelessness. An argument can be made, however, that the program could minimally help people get out of homelessness by aiding in the ability to find employment. It also adds to the quality of day-to-day life by allowing for easier mobility and the peace of mind of a safe place for possession.

Finally, the effectiveness of storage lockers in improving relations between people of Burien is extremely limited. It may slightly improve outside perceptions of people experiencing homelessness, but it does very little in actually building and maintaining relationships between Burien residents.

## **Tent Encampment**

A tent encampment would provide people experiencing homelessness in Burien access to a sanctioned form of non-traditional shelter. This option is not new or novel and has been extensively tested. A report from the National Coalition for the Homeless reviews nine different homeless encampments on the west coast, three of which are located in Washington. The report communicates a handful of common trends and conflicts encountered by encampments. All of the encampments reviewed are supported by different combinations of local government, church networks, and nonprofit agencies. Encampments vary in terms of permanence, community organization, and security. (Donovan et. al, 2010)

The City of Seattle has recently changed regulation regarding tent encampments. Tent encampments in Seattle have not been allowed to establish themselves in a location for longer than 90 days unless they are located on church property. The recent change increases the time an encampment can be established to six months. This policy change comes after failed campaigns by city government to dismantle encampments and underlines the tenuous existence and conflictual history of tent encampments in Seattle (Jaywork, 2015; Beekman, 2015). Non-permanent encampments are usually established in protest and in conflict with city government. (Donovan et. al, 2010) If the city decided to establish an encampment it should be permanent and have limited but clear support from city government. In this analysis, we examine the establishment of a permanent encampment that would house a maximum of sixty people.

## **Equity**

We project that this option would have a positive effect on the equity of individuals experiencing homelessness; however, we expect that this effect is not distributed equally. An

encampment would have a limit on how many people could stay in it as well as community rules that dictate behavior of encampment residents. These conditions will likely result in some individuals being unable to reside in the encampment either due to conduct or due to a lack of vacancies.

This option is likely to have a neutral effect on the equity of residents and business generally, but specific residents or businesses located near the encampment may experience a negative effect. Externalities from an encampment such as litter or drug use can be avoided with a properly established community in the encampment and the support offered by the city. (Donovan et. al, 2010) Even so, some residents or businesses may feel discomforted simply by the idea of an encampment adjacent to their business or residence.

### *Feasibility*

We estimate that cost of establishing and running an encampment for 60 people for one year is \$24,240-\$48,490. This estimate comes from an analysis which estimated the cost of housing a person in an encampment to be about \$30-\$60/person/month (Loftus-Farren, 2011). Nonprofits, churches, and local governments shared these costs in many of the encampment cases examined by the National Committee to End Homelessness. (Donovan et. al, 2010)

This option is complicated and the quality of its implementation is highly dependent on both the resources and will of the city, but also nonprofits and churches. In order to effectively pursue this option, the city would have to establish relationships and partner with interested churches and nonprofits. Managing tent encampments does not appear to be unknown work to nonprofit agencies as many seem to be engaged in this work, but it is difficult to tell how replicable their operations are. (Donovan et. al, 2010) Additionally, locating the encampment is likely to spur a loud conversation of NIMBYism (NIMBY is a commonly used acronym for not-in-my-backyard). Whether or not the encampment is well managed, it seems very likely that individuals will advocate it be located away from them.

### *Effectiveness*

This option appears to be highly effective in terms of lowering conflict over the use of public space. By providing a location for people to camp, less people will choose to camp in public spaces. As our interviews suggested, an encampment is not attractive to all individuals experiencing homelessness; in particular, individuals who cannot follow community rules of the encampment. These individuals may prefer to live alone, so an encampment would not be a suitable location for them. By this same logic, these individuals would find public space not to be a suitable location to live as well.

This option also appears to be highly effective in improving the condition of the homeless in Burien. An encampment can provide individuals with a range of benefits such as: personal safety, improved property protection, better access to services, community engagement, and

stability. (Loftus-Farren, 2011) Additionally, this option seems to have modest benefits in terms of improving relations between residents in Burien. An encampment provides individuals experiencing homelessness access to a more secure private space which would make their experience more similar to individuals in stable housing. This increased similarity of experience could have modest benefits in terms of improving the relations between people of different identities.

### Overnight Car-camp Lot

An overnight car-camp lot would be a space designated for people living in cars to park for the night to rest. This option was motivated by conversation with Burien Sheriffs as well as a Union Gospel Mission case manager. Sheriffs have said that they receive calls in the evening from residents to investigate unfamiliar vehicles parked near the residence. The usual investigation finds that the vehicle is being lived in and only parked there for the convenience of having a place to rest. In this instance, not having a designated place to park and rest has caused worry of Burien residents and elicited a sheriff response. A case manager from Union Gospel Mission told us that he worked specifically with individuals and families who lived in vehicles and that it was difficult to provide case management to these people because they could not find a consistent place to park their vehicle. A car-camp lot could address these problems by providing a place for people living in vehicles to park in the evening. This option is distinct from an encampment because it does not offer permanent or semi-permanent residence, but instead a particular amenity to people living in vehicles.

We have been unable to find research highly relevant to this option. This may be because while homeless individuals are difficult to track and observe, homeless individuals in vehicles are especially elusive. As expressed by the Union Gospel Mission case manager, unless people living in vehicles have a cell phone, there is no way to find them.

### *Equity*

This option would likely have a positive impact on the equity of the homeless population, but it would not fall equally across this population. Only people who have access to a vehicle would have access to this amenity so homeless people who do not have a vehicle would not benefit from this option. Homeless people without vehicles would also not be impacted negatively by this option.

Residents would also receive a positive equity impact from this option, but again this would not fall equally across residents. Most residents would benefit from having fewer unfamiliar vehicles parked in the evening near their residence because more of these vehicles would have an alternative place to park. Some residents may live near where the overnight lot is located and would feel negatively impacted by the presence of such an amenity near their residence. There appears to be little reason to assume that businesses would realize any real impact from this policy. Most businesses are closed during the evening when car-campers would be parking

for the night, so it does not seem likely that they would be impacted by car-campers under the status quo. We assume that the impact to their equity would be neutral unless the overnight lot was located near their business, then we would assume a negative impact.

### *Feasibility*

The cost of this option is likely to be relatively low to nil. The only resources needed to implement this option are a vacant lot of land or a lot that is already constructed as parking, restroom facilities, and security. If the lot is unused in the evening then homeless parking would not displace any regular customer parking. Since this amenity will attract car-campers to a single area away from various other places where they may attract resident and then sheriff attention, it will more efficiently direct officers. This gain in efficiency could offset the cost of providing security. Providing restrooms at the site could be done with a porta potty costing roughly \$100-\$200 a month or \$1,200-\$2,400 annually.

While this option presents a low cost it also seems difficult to implement. In particular, finding an appropriate location for the lot that does not acutely inconvenience business or residents around seems particularly difficult. Optimally, the lot could be located in an area where the owner and neighbors of the lot feel comfortable with its location. This could be accomplished with assurances from the sheriff's office that the lot will be appropriately patrolled. Alternatively, this option could be accomplished in partnership with a nonprofit agency that could manage security of the lot. Aside from these concerns, there would likely be problems with enforcing the overnight aspect of the lot. Since the amenity will only be provided during a certain period of the day, car-campers would need to leave the lot when the amenity is not offered. Enforcing this aspect of the option must be done fairly and systematically because of the vulnerability of homeless populations.

### *Effectiveness*

We project that this policy would have a low effect in lowering conflicts over the use of public space. While some people are inconvenienced by unfamiliar vehicles, there are also many who are not or at least not inconvenienced to the point where they will call the police.

An overnight car-camp lot could help improve the condition of the homeless by offering a relatively safe place to park in a known location, but it is not certain that this particular amenity is in short supply. There are many roads and lots that people have to park. These places likely offer varying amounts of safety and permanence compared to what would be offered by an overnight lot, but existing parking may be sufficient for some.

This option appears to have no mechanism to improve relations between people in Burien. Residents, both homeless and housed, may benefit from this policy, but it only improves relations between these groups by minimizing their interactions. Residents will see fewer people car-camping and car-campers will have a space to park where they will not be bothered.

This means there is no improvement of relations beyond the effects of minimized conflict over parking in certain places.

### **Transportation subsidies to connect to services**

People experiencing homelessness, needless to say, need transportation services to travel safely to their jobs, shelter sites, medical appointments, case management services and the other services they need on a daily basis. Lack of access to transportation services limits their mobility and cuts them off from these services. People experiencing homelessness neither could afford to pay the regular public bus fares nor could they usually have a transportation means of their own. In this light, some kind of subsidized transportation could ensure that they are connected to services that would improve their situation or could even lift them out of homelessness.

#### *Equity*

Transportation subsidies can be beneficial to people experiencing homelessness in a significant way. It gives them mobility to attend job interviews, commute to workplaces, and attend medical appointments, case management services and other services. In other words, lack of access to transportation will render them unable to attend their medical appointment with serious life consequences. It will cut them off from services such as case management that could help them deal with some of their problems such as chemical dependency. It will make them unable to seek and maintain jobs. Lack of transportation will make life unbearable for the homeless. This is particularly true for homeless people in Burien as most of the basic services that the homeless people need such as a place to shower are unavailable in the city.

Businesses and residents of the City of Burien will obtain some benefits from this program. Access to transportation service will make homeless people engage in their day-to-day life which in effect reduces the chance for them to spend most of their time in public places. With access to transportation, it is likely that homeless people visit showering places in nearby cities which in effect responds to hygiene issues and improves health outcomes for the residents. With access to transportation, one might expect that some homeless people will attend their case management services and seek and maintain jobs that will eventually help them move out of homelessness.

#### *Feasibility*

In the absence of homeless service agencies that provides transportation subsidies in the City of Burien, the responsibility to provide it seems to lie on the city's shoulder. In fact, the city has currently, as part of its Human Services Funding Allocation (\$1,500), an arrangement where it buys bus tickets and gives them to local law enforcement who would pass them out to a homeless person upon encounter on their discretion. While this is a commendable effort, it falls short of squarely addressing the transportation access challenge that the homeless people



have. The city should explore different approaches to find ways to improve transportation services for all homeless people efficiently. The city could, *among other things*, double its current spending (\$3,000) to buy adequate number of bus passes, and can partner with local service providers such as Transform Burien to administer them.

### *Effectiveness*

A transportation subsidy would be fairly effective in terms of reducing conflict over the use of public space. With access to transportation services, homeless people would be able to travel to other nearby cities to shower and wash their clothes. This will reduce hygiene-related concerns and improve community health outcomes. With access to transportation, homeless people would not be confined to the city or concentrate in public areas. Most importantly, with easy access to transportation, homeless people would attend their medical appointments to improve their medical conditions, case management services, and seek and maintain jobs to generate income. This program is definitely critical to get access to services and jobs that could lift the homeless out of homelessness.

### **Trade-Offs**

We have found that the tent encampment option is the most effective of all of the options we have examined. This option is the best at improving the condition of homeless residents in Burien and the best at decreasing conflicts in public spaces. While we find this option to be the most effective, it is also the most difficult to implement and the most expensive.

Both the laundry voucher option and the transportation subsidy options are the easiest options for the city to implement, but only moderately effective. These options can also both be easily scaled up. The city could easily increase or decrease the resources allocated to these options and provide more or less of these particular amenities.

The mobile shower option seems to have many middle ground characteristics. With a minimal resource budget, the mobile shower would require most of these funds in its first year. It would also be a difficult option to implement given the reliance on third-party participation. Service organizations would play a major part in both hosting the site and operating the daily activities, requiring relationship development and management on part of the city. However, if funds could be raised through collaborative funding streams, this would free up much of the initial startup costs. Once these startup costs are taken care of, the yearly expenses required would be minimal. This would free up funds for the implementation of additional options that could be combined to improve homeless conditions on multiple fronts.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Mobile Shower</b>	<b>Laundry Vouchers</b>	<b>Public Lockers</b>	<b>Transportation Subsidies</b>	<b>Overnight Car Camp Lot</b>	<b>Tent Encampment</b>
<b>Equity</b>						
Homeless Residents	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Housed Residents	Positive	Positive	Mixed (Postive/Negative) Positive (General Population) Negative (Specific Individulas)	Neutral	Mixed (Postive/Negative) Positive (General Population) Negative (Specific Individulas)	Mixed (Postive/Negative) Positive (General Population) Negative (Specific Individulas)
Business Owners	Neutral	Neutral	Mixed (Postive/Negative) Positive (General Population) Negative (Specific Individulas)	Neutral	Mixed (Postive/Negative) Positive (General Population) Negative (Specific Individulas)	Mixed (Postive/Negative) Positive (General Population) Negative (Specific Individulas)
<b>Feasibility</b>						
Cost (annual)	\$7,580	\$9,110	\$38,000	\$3,000	\$1,200-\$2,400	\$24,240-\$48,490
Ease Of Implementation	Medium	High	Medium	High	Low	Low
<b>Effectiveness</b>						
Lowering conflicts over use public space	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Improving condition of homeless populations	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Improving relations between people in Burien	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

\*\*\*Note that the estimated cost for the mobile shower unit **does not** include upfront costs of purchasing or renting the unit. Because of the multiple variables that could alter this cost, we chose to focus strictly on more reliable numbers through labor and upkeep. Upfront costs should be considered when evaluating these options.



(CEH, 2015)

This graphic does not give a completely accurate picture of homelessness density because it does not display a per capita count of homelessness, but it does provide a rough picture that implies that this is not an issue that is particular to the City of Burien. Due to the systemic nature of this problem, any single jurisdiction does not seem fully equipped in terms of resources to address homelessness. Additionally, because it is not a problem connected with a particular jurisdiction, a single city's responsibility to address this problem is not clear. To address these aspects of the problem regional cooperation is necessary.

The Council's consideration of the Committee to End Homelessness strategic plan is a helpful first step toward regional participation in an effort to address homelessness. Continued participation in this effort is a great opportunity to address systemic causes of homelessness. In addition to this opportunity, the recent discussion between Burien and nearby cities about homelessness also stands as an opportunity to forward regional cooperation.

### *Shifting Institutional Focus*

The events of the last eleven months have brought greater focus on the problem of homelessness in Burien. To address the problem of homelessness, this level of focus needs to be maintained over a long period of time. Burien has an opportunity to ensure that this focus does not fade by codifying this focus institutionally. In part, this is already taking place at the Burien Sheriff's office. Burien Sheriffs are cooperating with Auburn Youth Resources to create a service card which officers can provide to individuals experiencing homelessness. This action signals a shift in the institutional focus of the Sheriff's office which may yield better interactions between officers and individuals experiencing homelessness.

The city has a couple of opportunities to make similar shifts in institutional focus. The city could create a homelessness task force with nearby cities. This task force could capitalize on the relationships the city is building with service providers and city managers by involving them and other stakeholders in regular meetings to discuss the issue of homelessness. By creating and participating in this task force, the city would codify its focus on this problem as well as create a venue where it could discover new opportunities to address the problem.

Shortly before completing this report our team had the privilege to meet with a panel of city staff and local service providers to discuss homelessness. At this meeting city staff and service providers networked and discussed ideas about actions the city could take, what the city's role was in addressing homelessness, and opportunities for future action. We imagine that a taskforce would function similarly to that meeting but on an ongoing basis.

The other opportunity the city has to shift its institutional focus is to adopt an equity impact review tool that has a specific emphasis on homelessness. Equity impact review tools provide governments with a transparent systematic way to evaluate the impact of policies and decisions on the equity of different identities of people. Such a tool is particularly useful in this

case because the experience of homeless individuals is not likely to be shared or instantly understood by decision makers. An equity impact tool would ensure that the intent of policy is better aligned with the actual impact of the policy on people of disadvantaged identities.

### *Advocating for Affordable Housing*

Other cities have tried to address the issue of affordable housing by implementing inclusionary zoning policy. Some inclusionary zoning policy incentivizes the construction of affordable housing by offering subsidies or lessened requirements on projects that create affordable units. Other such policies place requirements on the provision of affordable housing within new projects. The effect of an inclusionary zoning policy is highly affected by the particular makeup of the local housing market (Furman Center for Real Estate & Urban Policy, 2008). To understand what kind of inclusionary zoning policy would be appropriate for Burien would require additional research.

Other opportunities for addressing affordable housing may only be discovered through discussion and conversation of the issue with other cities. The provision of affordable housing is a difficult task and may lie outside of the responsibility of a single city. Discussing this issue with other governments can help the city better understand its role and may help it discover new opportunities to address the issue.

## Conclusion

Homelessness is a complex issue with multiple factors impacting its scope and depth. With public concern in Burien on the rise about interactions between housed and unhoused individuals in public places, a policy window has opened up to make city-wide strategies to combat homelessness. Our research has aimed to help direct this conversation and to evaluate viable options through the narrow problem definition. Though the adopted course of action will ultimately be made by Burien elected officials, this report clearly demonstrates the trade-offs of each option in order to define the projected outcomes and describe how they measure up against one another.

Moving forward, any truly impactful effort on a grand scale requires participation and collaboration among multiple actors. Burien is unlikely to make significant impacts on its own and has a unique opportunity to engage with regional stakeholders to address homelessness issues. With homelessness on the rise throughout King County, the time is ripe for collaborative action. Burien's participation in this regional effort will not only boost the efficacy of the cooperative endeavor, but can also directly benefit Burien residents through shared learning and relationship building. This can translate to real positive outcomes regarding resident concerns of homelessness and be the impetus for a more equitable and gratified city.

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*Provided by Michelle Hankinson, Director of Homeless Services, Nexus on March 6, 2017 for inclusion in the 3/20/2017 Burien City Council packet.*

## **Burien Program Proposal**

### **Young Adult Shelter (See Table 1 on Page 2)**

Nationally, homeless young adults (18 to 24) are recognized as having different needs than the broader 'adult' populations. Young adults accessing shelter arrive with varying developmental needs, legal statuses, and often complicated relationship with their families. Shelters that cater to those specific needs are vital in reducing the amount of time a young adult spends homeless. Youth enter into the programs at night, and leave the facility in the morning. Shelter staff typically provide youth with light meals, showers, and referrals to appropriate services. Shelters are designed to be used as emergency housing, to reduce the number of young people sleeping outside.

**The attached budget covers 10 hours of shelter programming, 7 days a week, with 1 staff on. Capacity will be 6 beds. This estimate also includes support for an on call staff that could be reached for coverage or additional support when needed.** Utilities costs may vary dependent upon actual use.

### **Youth and Young Adult Drop In (See Table 2 on Page 3)**

Drop In centers are commonly referred to as the 'front door' to the homeless youth service network. They are typically low barrier and easy to access, offering services that meet the very basic of youth's needs. As the name suggests, a youth simply walks through the door. A drop in program may offer laundry services, showers, food, hygiene supplies, and other harm reduction resources. Youth are given a safe and sheltered space to access more intensive services as well, such as Case Management support. A youth is able to network and connect to programs designed to address a variety of needs including substance abuse treatment, education and employment support, mental health services and the like. Drop In centers also offer recreational and life skill development opportunities.

**The attached budget covers 5 hours of programming per day, 7 days a week with 2 staff on. Youth will be given a safe space to access services that support connections back with family, housing, and employment and education obtainment.**

**TABLE 1. Annual cost estimate of Young Adult Shelter**

**Young Adult Shelter 18-24**

Operates 365 nights a year

6 beds

One staff on @ a time w/ backup option

10 hours of coverage per night

<b>Service Staff</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>% allocated</b>	<b>Cost to program</b>
Shelter Monitor - Lead	33,280	1	33,280
Shelter Monitor	29,120	0.75	21,840
Relief - oncall coverage	29,120	0.25	7,280
<b>Service Staff total</b>			<b>62,400</b>
<b>Management / Operation Staff</b>			
Community Programs Manager	47,840	0.2	9,568
Department Director	60,000	0.1	6,000
<b>Management and Ops Staff total</b>			<b>15,568</b>
<b>Staff Subtotal</b>			<b>77,968</b>
Fringe Benefits @ 25%		0.25	<b>19,492</b>
<b>Total Staff</b>			<b>\$ 97,460</b>
<b>Operations</b>			
6 pads, bins, bedding, one staff computer			3,550*
Furniture, space set up			2,500*
Food Supplies (light snacks for morning)			2,500
Office Supplies			1,000
Cleaning Supplies / Household needs			2,500
Mileage / vehicle maintenance			1,500
Misc - Training, lisc, professional fees			500
Utilities			5,000
Overhead			15,000
<b>Total Operations</b>			<b>\$ 34,050</b>
<b>365 Young Adult Shelter Program Estimate</b>			<b>\$ 131,510</b>

\*Set-up cost, one-time cost

**Table 2. Youth and Young Adult Drop In Center**

### **Youth and Young Adult Drop In Center**

Operates programming 365 days per year

5 hours of programming per day

two staff on @ a time

<b>Service Staff</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>% allocated</b>	<b>Cost to program</b>
Drop In Specialist	31,200	0.6	18,720
Drop In Specialist	31,200	0.6	18,720
Drop In Specialist	31,200	0.6	18,720
			<b>\$</b>
<b>total</b>			<b>56,160</b>
<b>Management / Operation Staff</b>			
Community Programs Manager	47,840	0.2	9,568
Department Director	60,000	0.1	6,000
<b>total</b>			<b>15,568</b>
Fringe Benefits @ 25%		0.25	<b>17,932</b>
<b>Total Staff</b>			<b>\$ 89,660</b>
<b>Operations</b>			
Staff computer / printer			750*
Furniture, space set up			2,500*
Food Supplies (snacks and perishables)			2,500
Office Supplies			1000
Cleaning Supplies / Household needs			2,500
Mileage / vehicle maintenance			1,500
Misc - Training, lisc, professional fees			500
Utilities			3,500
overhead			15,000
<b>Total Operations</b>			<b>\$ 29,750</b>
<b>Youth and Young Adult Drop In</b>			<b>\$ 119,410</b>

\*Setup cost, one time.