

One Table: Addressing the Root Causes of Homelessness

Recommended Actions

For Discussion at One Table Public Meeting April 4, 2018

CALL TO ACTION

No one in our community, regardless of race, should experience the trauma of homelessness.

CONTEXT

One Table has brought together an unprecedented coalition of mental health and homeless service providers, advocates for the previously incarcerated, experts in the child welfare system, individuals experiencing homelessness, business and philanthropic leaders, and elected officials from across the county. The wide range of participation underscores how homelessness touches every city and community in our area. We asked participants to think boldly, to propose strategies that would make the biggest positive impact. We asked them to focus on strategies to address racial disparities as people of color, especially African American and Native American people, are disproportionately impacted by homelessness in our county.

The One Table community, civic, and elected working groups took up this charge and produced nearly 40 strategies combating the for drivers of homelessness. The seriousness of purpose and depth of thought involved was a testament to the importance of this issue for every corner of our community. We all want compassionate and effective solutions to this crisis. We want our neighbors to be safely and justly housed, with the support they need to live independent and dignified lives.

The One Table staff carefully studied all of the proposed strategies. We took in feedback from individuals with lived experience in behavioral health, child welfare, criminal justice, and homelessness systems. We looked across each issue area for common themes and solutions, because we know homelessness is triggered by interconnected causes. We considered the timeline for implementation, balancing longer-term solutions with actions ready for immediate implementation. We considered what legal and regulatory tools cities and the county have at their disposal. We evaluated how many people could be affected by each strategy, trying to prioritize those strategies that will reach the most number of people in need, and particularly to reach the most people of color.

We have used these lenses – equity, impact, shared themes, actionable – to narrow down the initial list of nearly 40 to the following six immediate actions. We believe these actions – with the coordinated effort of the cities across the county, King County leadership, providers and

activists, and our business and philanthropic communities – can put a stop to the flow of our friends and neighbors into homelessness. These actions focus on providing safe housing, supportive treatment, and secure futures for people in need.

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PRIORITY ACTIONS*

1. Provide **affordable homes for 5,000 households over 3 years** through a mix of affordable housing approaches, maximizing use of public land, and increasing access to existing housing choices.
2. Create a **housing stabilization fund to achieve 0 exits into homelessness** (including 0 inappropriate evictions), with a focus on those with the most acute need.
3. Provide **on-demand behavioral health treatment** that is racially, ethnically and culturally appropriate, flexible, person-centered, mobile, peer-focused, and trauma-informed.
4. Offer a **comprehensive service package for all foster youth aging out of care** to increase stability throughout their transition.
5. Strive to achieve **0 bookings for charges that are a direct result of homelessness and behavioral health crises**, through diversion and compliance requirement reform done through a racial justice lens. Study cost offsets from reduced jail use and redistribute savings to fund diversion programs.
6. Double **King County employment programs to train and employ 1300 individuals over 2 years** who are disproportionately at-risk of homelessness, and secure private and public-sector commitments to hire program graduates.

(*Numbers are solely for reference and do not denote prioritization.)

RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY PRINCIPLES

One Table Actions should:

- Prioritize services for the following populations at-risk of homelessness:
 - People of color disproportionately negatively impacted
 - Immigrants and refugees
 - People exiting the criminal justice system
 - People exiting behavioral health treatment
 - Young people exiting foster care
- Support workforce training in:
 - Institutional racism and bias
 - Harm reduction models
 - Trauma-informed care
- Recruit and retain a workforce that represents people being served by:
 - Funding programs that employ peers with lived experience
 - Funding organizations providing culturally-relevant services
 - Funding services provided by communities of color

ACTION 1: Provide affordable homes for 5,000 households over 3 years through a mix of affordable housing approaches, maximizing use of public land, and increasing access to existing housing choices.

Action draws on the following Community Action Working Group proposals:

- Actively promote transfer of public land for affordable housing, prioritizing ownership by communities of color disproportionately negatively affected.
- Expedite permitting and reduce fees for affordable housing prioritizing projects that affirmatively, equitably benefit communities of color where needs are greatest and/or counteract their displacement.
- Increase financial resources at the local, state, and federal level dedicated to affordable housing for communities of color with the greatest needs, and ensure that any additional resources are prioritized for communities of color more broadly, including immigrants and refugees, low-income communities and limited English-speaking communities.
- Trauma-informed, flexible housing, including co-housing, ADUs, etc. that address racially diverse cultural housing needs and equitably increases income and home ownership among communities of color impacted by racial disproportionality.
- Flexible housing at mid- and low-income level (DADU, SRO, ADU) with protections that ensure intervention prioritizes housing for communities of color most negatively impacted and prevents their displacement.
- Trauma-informed housing that affirmatively, equitably addresses racism and dominant culture (prioritizes large units, shared housing options, and recovery housing).

ACTION 2: Create a housing stabilization fund to achieve 0 exits into homelessness (including 0 inappropriate evictions), with a focus on those with the most acute need.

Action draws on the following Community Action Working Group proposals:

- Create a housing stabilization fund to pay rent and utilities while people are hospitalized, in full-time treatment, or incarcerated and temporarily unable to pay rent.
- Create a financial incentive program for inpatient treatment programs to find stable, long-term housing for people who are exiting treatment.
- Longer-term rent support for people of color disproportionately negatively impacted, to address institutional and structural racism across systems.
- Increased investments in reunification and addressing concerns before children ever come into care.
- Divert all homelessness-related bookings to services rather than jail. "Divert first, book as a last resort."
- Change in policy to allow for more flexible funding to address needs of individuals and prevent homelessness.

ACTION 3: Provide on-demand behavioral health treatment that is racially, ethnically, and culturally appropriate, flexible, person-centered, mobile, peer-focused, and trauma-informed.

Action draws on the following Community Action Working Group proposals:

- Develop and expand Flexible Person-Centered Behavioral Health approaches that use motivational interviewing and harm reduction and focus on what the client requests and do not dictate a specific course of treatment, e.g. abstinence or in-patient treatment.
- Create an incentive pool to bring behavioral health treatment to a person's natural environment. Because Medicaid behavioral health payments are so low and caseloads are so high, behavioral health providers primarily provide services in their offices. People in stable housing may still need behavioral health services, but may not go to a service provider's office location.
- Expand Peer Bridger Programs (a person who uses his or her lived experience of recovery from mental illness and/or SUD addiction to deliver services in behavioral health settings to promote recovery and resilience) and create peer crisis respite houses in all communities throughout King County.
- Expand opportunities in the behavioral health workforce for people with lived experience, particularly for people of color, which removes barriers and pays well.
- Focus on the strengths of families (including foster families and kinship care), building the family unit support through counseling, training, mental health, and behavioral health services.

ACTION 4: Offer a comprehensive service package for all foster youth aging out of care to increase stability throughout their transition.

Action draws on the following Community Action Working Group proposals:

- Broaden the extended foster care program to include youth up to age 25 with comprehensive, person-centered services including guaranteed housing, education and employment.
- Increased investments in reunification and addressing concerns before children ever come into care.
- Focus on the strengths of families (including foster families and kinship care), building the family unit support through counseling, training, mental health, behavioral health services.

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ACTION 5: Strive to achieve 0 bookings for charges that are a direct result of homelessness and behavioral health crises, through diversion and compliance requirement reform done through a racial justice lens. Study cost offsets from reduced jail use and redistribute savings to fund diversion programs.

Action draws on the following Community Action Working Group proposals:

- Divert all homelessness-related bookings to human services rather than jail with a goal of eliminating racial disproportionality in these types of bookings. “Divert first, book as a last resort.”
- Educate the criminal justice system to be homeless and housing informed (judges, prosecutors, jail staff, law enforcement etc.) including training on structural and institutional racism. Assess and implement booking criteria and sentencing guidelines that are racially equitable and homeless-informed.
- Human-centered and racially explicit review and redesign of compliance requirements, which are then redesigned and implemented with a racial equity and social justice framework. Offer alternatives to supervision and incarceration including education, vocational, involvement with community-based agencies, behavioral health treatment that are equitably utilized and culturally responsive, and have racially just outcomes. Ensure compliance requirements do not penalize homelessness and poverty.
- Conduct a fiscal, cost and power analysis of criminal justice investments using a racial equity impact review, and redirect half of all criminal justice (including law enforcement and corrections) spending to early intervention, diversion and behavioral health services that advance racially just outcomes.

ACTION 6: Double King County Employment Programs to train and employ 1300 individuals over 2 years who are disproportionately at-risk of homelessness and secure private and public sector commitments to hire program graduates.

Action draws on the following Community Action Working Group proposals:

- Expand opportunities in the behavioral health workforce for people with lived experience, particularly for people of color, which removes barriers and pays a livable wage.
- Scale King County Jobs Initiative and other dedicated funds for training pathways in high wage jobs for groups most at risk of homelessness—justice-involved individuals, single men with no support system, youth without a high-school education, youth aging out of foster care.
- Elevate training and employment plans as a core offering alongside housing 1st polices in diversion—train housing staff on income/employment referral options.
- Create a system that encourages employers to adopt initiatives from a menu of actionable options that address racial inequities in hiring, such as:
 - Training on hiring practices to reduce racial bias
 - Holding certain number of slots to hire those at risk of homelessness (with reimbursement from public-private fund for some costs)
 - Paid internships
 - Investing in education programming for at-risk youth (e.g. summer academies above)
 - (*In order to effect long-term change with consistent results, this strategy may require an implementation phase of 3-10 years.)
- Broaden the extended foster care program to include youth up to age 25 with comprehensive, person-centered services including guaranteed housing, education and employment.
- Recruit, incentivize and support people with lived experience and/or people of color to become social workers.

Strategies to Address through Other Policy Initiatives and Taskforces

Strategies to forward along to Regional Affordable Housing Task Force:

- Endorse and enforce tenant protections, including Just Cause Eviction, Third-Party Inspections, substandard housing, and tenant screening, including incentives for jurisdictions that participate.
- Mandatory housing affordability tied to growth management countywide with affirmative access to communities of color for affordable units. Should include deep affordability at high capacity transit locations and address demographic and cultural needs (e.g., larger unit size) of local communities.
- Preservation tax credit focused on properties within communities of color.
- Rent control / rent stabilization to address racial disproportionality in rent burden.
- Create non-traditional homeownership options targeted to communities of color, particularly Black/African American and American Indian/Alaska Native.
- King County and every municipality pass fair housing laws (mirroring Seattle's Fair Chance Housing law) with juvenile records and reporting components.

Strategies to recommend to state:

- Increase availability of foster placements for youth of color through a campaign to target families of color as foster families by paying more to families of color and offering other incentives and supports.
- Broaden the extended foster care program to include youth up to age 25 with comprehensive, person-centered services including guaranteed housing, education and employment.

Strategies for Familiar Faces to continue work on:

- Create a network of Reception/Transition Hubs with culturally relevant services. These community-sited centers would provide a variety of services and be staffed with folks who look like the community; would offer a range of residential/non-residential/drop in facilities; and would be available as a diversion alternative to jail and as a reentry "landing spot" for people leaving jail.

Strategies for King County Department of Community & Human Services, Seattle Human Services Department, and broader workforce efforts:

- Create Summer Academies for at-risk youth in middle school.
- More personalized attention and support to youth in need/at risk in most high-poverty middle schools—includes combination of more high-quality teachers, counselors, and community-based mentors.

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