



# Homeless Action Plan



# Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
The Plan .....	7
A. Prevent Homelessness .....	7
Increase Housing Availability and Affordability .....	7
Payment Assistance and Diversion Programs .....	9
Homebuyer Education, Foreclosure Prevention and Affordable Home Purchase .....	10
Connect to Employment Support to Increase Incomes .....	11
Develop Senior and Assisted Living Housing (Including Permanent Supportive Housing) .....	12
Create/Support a Housing Crisis Hotline .....	13
B. Reduce Homelessness: .....	14
Short-Term Interventions .....	14
Medium-Term Interventions .....	20
Long-Term Interventions .....	22
C. Improve Quality of Life .....	24
Day Drop-In Center .....	24
Encampment and Trash Clean-Up .....	25
Business Community Outreach and Information .....	26
D. Government and Legislative Advocacy: .....	26
Conclusion .....	27
Supporting Data – Current Status as of 2023 .....	28
A. Measuring Homelessness and Housing Instability: .....	28
Annual Point In Time (PIT) Count .....	28
State data on homelessness and housing instability .....	29
County-wide housing instability survey and rental assistance report .....	29
School district statistics .....	29
City data collection tools .....	29
Community Management Information System (CMIS) .....	30
Outreach team feedback .....	30
B. Types and Causes of Homelessness: .....	30
Lack of Housing that Spokane Valley Residents Can Afford .....	31
Mental Health/Substance Use/Disabilities .....	34

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

Family Conflict and Domestic Violence .....	34
C. Spokane County Shelter Network: .....	34
D. Available Services: .....	36
Current City Positions/Contract Services .....	36
Regional Collaboration .....	38
E. Available Funding .....	40
F. Existing Goals Related to Homelessness .....	43
G. Community Feedback .....	44
Results from the Community Survey .....	45
Priorities Identified at the Community Open House .....	47
SVHAP Feedback Outreach List .....	49
H. 2023 Work Plan Activities .....	50
Award ARPA funding for Housing and Homelessness purposes .....	50
Establishment of Housing Homeless Program .....	53

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### **Introduction**

Homelessness is one of the most challenging social issues facing the City of Spokane Valley (“City”). To significantly prevent and/or reduce homelessness, any community needs to implement a systematic, long-term response that ensures homelessness does not occur in the first place whenever possible or, if it cannot be prevented, is a rare, brief and one-time experience. Homelessness is not unique to the City; however, Spokane Valley does have a distinct character that requires a plan that reflects the City’s values and goals.

Although there is not one single cause to becoming homeless, some of the more common reasons include a shortage of housing that residents can afford, a lack of adequate or stable income, substance use disorders, mental health concerns, and domestic violence. The multiple causes demand a varied response including prevention, diversion, reduction, and enforcement activities. In addition, approaches vary depending upon the types of homelessness. For example, addressing chronic homelessness requires different approaches than situational homelessness. Veterans have unique needs, as do homeless youth or families. Regardless of the reason for becoming homeless, the goal is for homelessness to be a rare, brief, and one-time experience, and in the case of chronic homelessness, to move people into shelter and connected to services as quickly as possible.

Homelessness is a regional problem, and the regional stakeholders should collaborate to address it, whenever possible. Regional coordination, planning, funding, and/or accountability could improve efficiency, communication, and management. The current system relies on multiple funding sources answering to multiple advisory boards and governing bodies. This approach is confusing and not cost effective for providers that must submit funding applications and outcome reports to a variety of sources, each with its own particular requirements, and results in little or no coordination between service providers. It also creates duplication of administrative efforts and can lead to information silos and entities working at cross purposes.

In 2023, the community has been discussing the possibility of forming a regional authority to address homelessness. As part of this discussion, several representatives from the City of Spokane Valley, Spokane County and the City of Spokane visited Houston to learn more about the successes at reducing the number of unsheltered homeless. In the decade after 2011, Houston reduced its homeless population by 63%, moving 25,000 people experiencing homelessness directly into apartments and houses. Moving from a fractured approach to a regional authority was one of the key take-aways shared by Houston. A housing-first model combined with the rapid construction of thousands of units, the consolidation of services to eliminate duplication, improve efficiencies and outcomes, and the use of data to allocate resources and program selection to get the biggest rate of return are other key takeaways of what made Houston successful.

While looking at Houston and other examples can be useful, it is also important to remember that conditions in Houston, or other communities, are not necessarily present in Spokane Valley. For example, vacancy rates, zoning laws, and high-dollar donors like professional sports teams are different. It also needs to be mentioned that regional cooperation comes at the cost of some local control.

The City will continue to plan and direct efforts to address homelessness within our boundaries, while remaining open to approaches that seek to improve broader collaboration and coordination. Furthermore, the City is committed to continuing to work with regional partners through the Continuum

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

of Care board, and on efforts like the annual Point In Time count. This plan provides strategies that could be implemented to address homelessness and are tailored for those experiencing homelessness within the City.

This Plan also recognizes that available funding is limited and only a few of the strategies could be funded by the City. Further, the City does not endeavor to own or manage any future facilities or services. The City will support community partners as it is able in providing other important services, recognizing that it is not within the City's ability to fund or manage many of the programs that may be needed in our community. Many local churches and other nonprofits offer services that aim to prevent and reduce homelessness. Partnering with these groups or other providers where feasible to support their work is one strategy for making an impact without the City taking over or owning any specific facility or service.

This Plan is a living document that requires ongoing review and regular updates based on changes in legislation, community priorities, program outcomes, enforcement, and available funding.

Through work with service providers, community members, including people who have experienced homelessness themselves, law enforcement, businesses, County officials, City Council, and City staff, the following principles were developed to guide creation of this action plan:

- There are many people who are not currently homeless who may be susceptible to becoming homeless due to medical costs, loss of job, change in housing cost, being a victim of abuse, or other significant life events. Assisting those who are at risk of homelessness is the most effective means of reducing further increases in the number of those experiencing homelessness in the City. Identifying opportunities to keep people housed is the primary focus of the plan.
- A shared framework among all stakeholders with a clear plan of action will ensure that the City and service providers are all working cooperatively and collaboratively towards the same goals of preventing and reducing homelessness and improving quality of life for our community.
- Approaches and action developed in this plan must be fiscally responsible and sustainable. Further, all approaches and actions developed in this plan must lead to meaningful, measurable outcomes that can be tracked to assess effectiveness at either preventing homelessness, reducing current levels of homelessness, or improving quality of life for our community.
- The safety and well-being of the community is a priority, including residents, businesses and their customers, and people experiencing homelessness.
- While the City recognizes that an approach that includes both law enforcement and supportive services is essential, the City firmly believes and recognizes that homelessness is not a crime. However, any individuals engaging in illegal behaviors that impact the community will be held accountable. Accountability is a critical component of responding to homelessness.
- Support for long-term solutions that help each person experiencing homelessness find permanent housing *with* supportive services is critical. Ultimately, permanent housing without government subsidies is the goal. Helping households achieve financial independence whenever possible is critical for the long-term success of both the household and the homeless response system.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

- Each person experiencing homelessness is unique with diverse needs requiring a tailored approach founded on trust and respect. Interventions should be data driven to get the biggest rate of return and achieve better outcomes. Some populations are over-represented among those experiencing homelessness, so tailoring interventions to best serve these groups is critical for reducing or eliminating homelessness.
- Community awareness and involvement in the initiatives is critical for success.
- Regional stakeholders should collaborate when possible to leverage resources to address homelessness.
- Homelessness represents a complex social problem. The plan must be flexible, and we will regularly review outcomes to improve our plan and adapt to changing conditions.
- Providers must adhere to these guiding principles and provide services in support of this plan's stated goals with measurable outcomes.
- Recognizing that funding is limited, services will be prioritized for those individuals that are willing to receive them.

Within consideration of the guiding principles above, this action plan aims to achieve the following objectives:

- A. Preventing homelessness from occurring where possible
- B. Reducing current levels of homelessness
- C. Improving the quality of life of residents, including those experiencing homelessness.

The order of these objectives reflects the City's priorities for action. Because sufficient resources to address each area are not available, the City will select priorities and direct resources to those priority areas first, even as it works to make progress within each objective.

Keeping people in their homes and preventing homelessness from occurring in the first place is a top priority. Assisting those currently experiencing homelessness to transition back to stable housing is the next priority. Ultimately, this Plan strives to assist individuals to become financially independent and/or addiction free so they can achieve and maintain their own housing stability on their own. Making progress on these objectives will also serve to improve the quality of life for all Spokane Valley residents, as reduced current and future homelessness will reduce impacts of homelessness that are felt by all members of the community. Each of these objectives is supported by a variety of strategies outlined in the plan below.

# Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

## **The Plan**

This plan is a living document that will require regular updates to remain relevant. As needs change, goals are accomplished, and more knowledge is gained, this plan will need to be updated to reflect the changing landscape of homelessness in the City. The intent is to update the plan every five years, in line with the regional Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, which is updated on the same timeline. Additionally, the Plan will be the basis for annual goal setting and work-plans as the City seeks to make progress on its goals related to homelessness.

### **A. Prevent Homelessness**

Homelessness prevention and diversion is targeted to people who are at risk of becoming homeless and focuses on self-sufficiency and stabilization. Considered a national best practice, prevention is far less expensive than providing shelter beds with accompanying services. Additionally, preventing homelessness is a pro-active approach necessary for reducing future levels of homelessness. According to one homeless advocacy organization, children who experience homelessness are more likely to experience homelessness as an adult.<sup>1</sup> and are approximately three times more likely to drop out of school<sup>2</sup>, five times more likely to be victims of sexual violence, and seven times more likely to attempt suicide than their housed counterparts.<sup>3</sup> This means that any success in preventing homelessness now will pay dividends in the future both for those who are at risk of homelessness, and the community at large.

A recent county-wide housing stability survey carried out by The Zone received over 1,400 responses. Of those from the county (outside the City of Spokane) who responded, 54% said they had taken out a loan to pay rent, 47.8% said they provide financial support to a parent, older child, or other extended family member, and 28% said they have lived with others to make ends meet.<sup>4</sup> According to the City's Housing Action Plan, 48% of Spokane Valley's renter households are cost burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their total household income for rent. Further, some 25% of Spokane Valley's renter households are severely cost burdened, paying more than 50% of their income on rent. These are households that are on the verge of homelessness in many cases.

Funding of strategies for preventing homelessness, increasing home ownership rates, or decreasing existing rates of homelessness need to be data driven to ensure that interventions have the greatest impact possible.

### **Increase Housing Availability and Affordability**

Increasing the availability and flexibility of housing that Spokane Valley residents can afford is perhaps the most critical improvement to help reduce homelessness. The correlation between housing affordability to homelessness is well documented.<sup>5</sup> Without housing that Spokane Valley residents can

---

<sup>1</sup> [Effects of Homelessness on Families - Invisible People](#)

<sup>2</sup> [REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE Update: Homeless Student Data 2019 \(www.k12.wa.us\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> Risk and Resilience: Differences in risk factors and health outcomes between homeless and non-homeless students in 2017 YRBS Data Read and full paper: <http://bit.ly/SHC-YRBS2018>

<sup>4</sup> [2022 Rental Survey Results \(squarespace.com\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Housing-Affordability-and-Stability-Brief.pdf \(usich.gov\)](#); [New Research Quantifies the Link Between Housing Affordability and Homelessness - National Alliance to End Homelessness](#); [Homelessness Rises Faster Where Rent Exceeds a Third of Income - Zillow Research](#);

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

afford, the upward trend in homelessness will continue. Implementing the strategies recommended in the City's Housing Action Plan (HAP) as quickly as possible to increase housing stock in Spokane Valley is critical to addressing the current housing crisis, and by extension the current homelessness crisis. Shelters, outreach, diversion, and every other component outlined in this plan can only work to reduce homelessness if there are affordable units available for those in need of homes.

The HAP identifies strategies that would help to increase the availability of housing that Valley residents can afford. Affordable housing is defined as housing that does not take more than 30% of the household's income. The City is actively pursuing consideration and implementation of recommendations made in the HAP. This process includes input from developers, realtors, contractors, and housing advocates to find consensus and create buy-in for implementation of needed changes to increase the stock of housing that City residents can afford. The majority of recommendations include regulatory changes to support more housing of various types, such as the "missing middle" options. "Missing middle" housing includes options between single family homes and apartment buildings, such as duplexes, triplexes, condominiums, row homes and cottage court housing. Developing a variety of entry level options is also critical. These options, common throughout the United States, provide more housing options that can meet a variety of needs and budgets, but they are often not compliant with the City's current zoning regulations. The City should lobby at the state level for changes to policies and codes that drive the price of home construction. The City should also explore actions at the local level to reduce development costs.

The City may also consider direct funding of housing projects to provide additional housing units that are affordable more quickly. Additionally, the City could require or incentivize new multi-family housing developments set aside a percentage of units for Project Based Vouchers (PBV). These housing vouchers administered by the Spokane Housing Authority are tied to a specific unit (as opposed to Section 8 vouchers that travel with the tenant to any unit they might reside in) and guarantee a rent payment up to the Fair Market Rate for the unit's size as determined by HUD.

Creating a fund that incentivizes landlords and developers to set aside units that are affordable could be another strategy for increasing availability. Requiring that new units remain affordable for people with different incomes can be an effective tool for increasing the stock of units affordable to a variety of households, without the requirements and conditions that can come along with housing vouchers. Similarly, preserving the existing stock of affordable housing is also critical. Many affordable units are bound by time-limited financing agreements, meaning after a certain period the owner can convert affordable units into market-rate units. This can, and has, lead to the displacement of long-time tenants and added to the housing crisis for low-earning households. Identifying housing where affordability covenants may be expiring, and then working with partners to ensure affordability requirements remain in place, is another key strategy to ensuring sufficient housing options for households of all incomes.

Measures that make it easier and less expensive for renters to get into units can also help to reduce the barriers those living on limited incomes face when trying to find or maintain stable housing. For example, a limited duration universal background check and application could greatly reduce the cost of applying for housing in a market when multiple applications are often needed before a unit can be secured. For those living on limited or fixed incomes, \$30-\$50 application fees can quickly become unaffordable, especially when low vacancy rates create intense competition for open units. Establishing programs to help tenants pay move-in costs or to provide landlords with additional damage deposit resources could also help low-income renters connect with open units.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

The Housing and Essential Needs program managed by Goodwill for Spokane County has successfully used payments for double-deposits, move-in incentives, and move-in costs to house individuals that would otherwise have trouble being approved for a unit. But only those who have a disability, meet income requirements, are not receiving TANF or SSI, and participate in substance use disorder treatment when required are eligible. Further, program funding only covers a portion of those that are eligible, and actual program enrollment is based off a needs assessment that means only those with the most acute needs may get assistance. Washington does have a Landlord Mitigation Fund that serves to help offset risks of damages to landlords<sup>6</sup>. Advertising this existing program and helping landlords comply with its requirements could be a low-cost way to help reduce barriers for some low-income renters.

### **Payment Assistance and Diversion Programs**

Payment assistance programs can be critical for preventing homelessness. Payment assistance can take the form of rental assistance, or mortgage assistance for those that may own their home. These time-limited programs can help households weather financial storms that would otherwise result in the loss of housing and potentially result in an eviction, which makes obtaining housing in the future even more difficult. Payment assistance programs can be resource-intensive and often do not address the underlying causes that lead to eviction. For these reasons, rental assistance programs are costly and challenging to sustain. However, they often cost less than emergency housing, and they can help households avoid the trauma and life disruptions that can come with homelessness and help households retain much needed assets in the case of mortgage assistance. As stated earlier, this Plan strives to assist individuals so they can achieve and maintain their own housing stability so this intervention should be short term and limited. For short-term payment assistance to be most effective, a plan needs to be in place so that the cycle of imminent eviction/foreclosure does not repeat itself.

Rental assistance programs funded by local, state and federal dollars have spent tens of millions of dollars in Spokane County to prevent evictions in the last few years. Despite the size of this investment, rental assistance programs have not been sufficient to address the need for these resources, leaving many Spokane Valley households that would otherwise be eligible without this option. According to a survey conducted by The Zone in Spokane that has received over 1,400 responses, 47% of respondents owe back rent, 75% say they are struggling to pay rent now or in the near future, and 56% have already received eviction notices.<sup>7</sup>

Diversion is an intervention designed to immediately address the needs of someone who has just lost their housing and become homeless. Diversion is a client-driven approach; its goal is to help the person or household find safe alternative housing immediately, rather than entering shelter or experiencing unsheltered homelessness. It is intended to ensure that the homelessness experience is as brief as possible, to prevent unsheltered homelessness, and to avert stays in shelter. Diversion does not necessarily include but can be combined with financial assistance. Diversion assistance is often administered through a Centralized Diversion Fund (CDF). CDF funds can be used for any one-time intervention that is directly related to a stable housing outcome, including first/last month rent and deposit, utility assistance, transportation assistance, and hotel/motel vouchers to those with no

---

<sup>6</sup> [Landlord Mitigation Program \(wa.gov\)](http://Landlord Mitigation Program (wa.gov))

<sup>7</sup> [The ZoNE \(thezonespokane.org\)](http://The ZoNE (thezonespokane.org))

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

significant barriers to permanent housing. Funds can also be used to pay for transportation to another location if stable housing at the destination location can be verified.

Data from the county-wide Centralized Diversion Fund managed by SNAP show an average cost of \$1,800 per intervention for the period from November 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022. Additionally, 87% of those who accessed the CDF were still housed six months after receiving assistance. According to statistics taken from the Department of Commerce Golden Report, this number is far lower than the average cost for either rapid re-housing or emergency shelter intervention, which averaged \$8,144 and \$17,500 per person in 2021 respectively.<sup>8</sup> Diversion is a cost-effective and efficient way to help beneficiaries. The Centralized Diversion Fund program has consistently not been able to meet the need for assistance due to high demand and lack of sufficient funding.

## **Homebuyer Education, Foreclosure Prevention, and Affordable Home Purchase**

Helping renters to stay housed is important, but connecting Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed, or “A.L.I.C.E” households, to home-ownership opportunities is a powerful way to help families maintain stable housing while also building generational wealth and closer connections to their community. Entry-level home ownership options are particularly important for households trying to break the cycle of excessive rent burdens that trap many low-earning families, many of whom pay rents higher than what a mortgage for a similar unit would cost them. Stable housing that employees can afford is also critical for businesses looking to fill job vacancies.

The Spokane Association of Realtors (SAR) tracks housing availability and population statistics related to housing. According to SRA, the City is experiencing a housing supply shortage of approximately 6,251 units or 14 percent of the current number of units in the city. With a median family income of \$60,079, a Spokane Valley family can afford a \$250,000 home with current mortgage rates. In November 2023, there were only 36 total listings in the City at or lower than \$250,000 according to the SAR.<sup>9</sup> This means that many households seeking to become homeowners simply cannot find options within their price range. As a result, exorbitant rental expenses continue to create a significant drag on many family budgets, with no hope of turning renting to owning in sight.

There are a number of programs in Spokane County that assist households in becoming homeowners, or to stay in the homes they already own. Perhaps the most well-known is Habitat for Humanity, which was recently awarded ARPA funds from the City to purchase land for home ownership opportunities moving forward.

SNAP also manages several programs focused on helping people to buy a home or stay in the home they already own. SNAP serves approximately 600 residents each year with Homebuyer Education, with about 188 of those served in 2022 residing in Spokane Valley. Of the 214 households that participated in SNAP’s Foreclosure Prevention services, 65 were in Spokane Valley. In addition, 14 Spokane Valley residents benefited from SNAP’s foreclosure prevention mediation services (free of charge, and 32 of the 103 homes purchased with help from SNAP in 2022 were in Spokane Valley.

---

<sup>8</sup> [State Strategic Plan, Annual Report and Audits \(wa.gov\)](https://www.wa.gov/strategic-plan/annual-report-and-audits)

<sup>9</sup> Data provided on 11/8/23 by Darin Watkins, Government Affairs Director for the Spokane Association of Realtors

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

Financial institutions also provide workshops to help individuals with basic financial information such as how to become debt free, budgeting, homebuying, protecting their credit score and more. These workshops could be extremely useful for individuals to stay housed and become homeowners.

Whether SNAP, Habitat for Humanity, or other organizations focused on increasing home ownership, programs that help low-earning households obtain or retain homeownership are critical for addressing the current housing unaffordability crisis. Focusing resources on entry-level homeownership is a way to both stabilize families, build generational wealth, and provide stability in neighborhoods where tenants in rental units come and go regularly.

### **Connect to Employment Support to Increase Incomes**

Employment support can be another important way to help people avoid homelessness. Employment support could include assistance with becoming job-ready and finding employment. This would include job training/readiness programs, and funds available to help pay for job-related costs such as specialized work clothing, tools, or training.

Support for individuals who want to increase their income would also fall under this category. There are many residents who work full-time, but still struggle to pay the costs of rising rents and other basic needs. According to Family Promise, approximately half of the households they serve include at least one family member who is employed. Assisting A.L.I.C.E households to up-skill and find better paying employment can both serve to reduce the potential for future homelessness, while also helping to address the shortage of employees in better paying sectors. Increased incomes would help to meet rising rental costs, and ideally would increase rates of home ownership.

Increasing income is related to education and job training opportunities. Programs such as Foundational Community Supports (FCS) and the Basic Food and Employment Training (BFET) specialize in job training and placement for individuals with a variety of barriers, from lack of job experience, to living with disabilities. Agencies such as WorkSource Spokane, Spokane Workforce Council, Next Generation Zone, Career Path Services, and the Employment Security Department (ESD) can help those with jobs to up-skill and seek better-paid employment opportunities. The lack of needed labor force in the current job market has created conditions for those interested in apprenticeships or paid training opportunities to learn new skills and get hired by firms eager to bring on additional staff. For example, manufacturing companies like Wagstaff, Hydrofab, and Mercer Mass Timber will hire and train from within or provide a pathway to apprenticeships to help employees develop needed skills.

The City's Economic Development Department actively works to recruit employers and match them to employees who fit the needed skill sets. Attracting quality employers and jobs provide higher income opportunities for residents that allow them to afford rent, and ideally lead to an increase in home ownership in our community. Employment options that provide a living wage are critical to reversing the trend of households being priced out of the market, which is directly related to increasing homelessness.

For other individuals experiencing or on the verge of homelessness, increasing income means applying for benefits such as Social Security Insurance (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Veterans' benefits. Connecting eligible individuals to the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) program or Ware Law Offices for assistance applying for and appealing rejections for Social Security benefits is one

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

avenue to help connect some people to additional income. Recruiting SOAR or legal assistance providers to establish a location in the Valley would help make the services more accessible for those in this community rather than requiring them to go to downtown Spokane to receive assistance, as this can present a significant barrier to some of those who are eligible for benefits. Referring Veterans to Goodwill's Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) program and Healthcare for Homeless Vets (HCHV) is important to ensure that any veterans we work with have access all the benefits to which they may be entitled, including housing assistance. In any case, having staff dedicated to making these connections with clients, and referrals to the appropriate services, is critical.

### **Develop Senior and Assisted Living Housing (Including Permanent Supportive Housing)**

Many of the unhoused individuals the City encounters are living with disabilities, unable to work due to age or other conditions or have significant developmental or psycho-social impairments that make finding and retaining a traditional apartment unlikely. During the 2022 Point In Time count, 31% of all adult respondents self-identified as living with a serious mental illness, as compared to 4% of Spokane County residents estimated to be living with a serious mental illness in 2020.<sup>10</sup> These individuals are statistically overrepresented in the unhoused population and are often more vulnerable and at risk for negative outcomes. Getting these people into housing that can meet their needs is critical for their long-term stability.

Dedicated senior housing is needed to meet the needs of Spokane Valley's senior population, which is increasing as is the need for affordable and safe options that meet the unique challenges faced by older individuals. Assisted living facilities that provide services on-site are critical to help seniors age in place and avoid the need for more intensive and costly housing solutions, and to prevent them from becoming homeless. The City has partnered with providers such as Spokane Action Partners (SNAP) that focus on this specific need. Several local housing developers and nonprofits, including churches, also work on the issue of affordable senior housing, presenting possible opportunities for the City to support the creation of additional units for this target population.

Assisted living options for those under age 65 with mental or physical impairments are also needed. Currently, there are very few options for those who need these types of services. Requirements for providers of assisted living facilities can be complicated and require a specific set of skills and abilities that make it challenging for new providers to come online. Incentivizing exiting assisted living facility providers to expand and accept more Medicaid-eligible clients may be a faster and more efficient way of making additional needed beds available.

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is an option that aims to provide more intensive services in housing. PSH is subsidized, leased housing with no limit on length of stay that prioritizes people who need comprehensive support services to retain tenancy, and utilizes admissions practices designed to lower barriers to entry, especially as related to rental history, criminal history, and personal behaviors. PSH units are owned and operated by housing and service providers, not local governments. Permanent supportive housing is paired with on-site or off-site voluntary services designed to support a person living with a

---

<sup>10</sup> [Point In Time 2022 - Draft \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

complex and disabling behavioral health or physical health condition who was experiencing homelessness or was at imminent risk of homelessness. The goal is to help the resident become a successful tenant, to improve their health status, and to connect the resident with community-based health care, treatment, or employment services.

PSH is one important option that can help provide housing stability for many of the people in our homeless response system. However, it is not designed to provide many of the more technical or clinical services needed by those who live with significant disabilities, including possible mental health disorders. To serve this population, more intensive assisted living options are needed.

### **Create/Support a Housing Crisis Hotline**

While the state-wide 211 resource line can direct residents to local resources, it is not a Diversion service and is not equipped to help tenants at risk of homelessness navigate the often-complicated landlord-tenant legal environment. Creating a housing crisis-specific hotline or bolstering the current 211 program with diversion-related resources and expertise could be a relatively cost-effective way of supporting those at risk of homelessness. The Tenants' Union, Northwest Justice project, Northwest Fair Housing Alliance, or one of the dispute resolution centers in Spokane that assists with eviction mediation could be potential partners to assist with this type of hotline.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### **B. Reduce Homelessness:**

The second objective of this plan is to reduce current levels of homelessness. Because each individual and family experiencing homelessness is impacted by their own unique set of needs and challenges, best practice is to employ multiple strategies simultaneously to achieve this objective. Looking at possible interventions through a lens of matching resources to the unique needs and experiences of those we are working with is imperative.

The transition from homelessness to being stably housed can be seen as a continuum, with certain interventions and resources needed in the initial stages of the process, while different resources and interventions are needed at later stages. Ultimately, the goal is for those we serve to become or remain stably housed, which means they are not at risk of losing their housing. Whenever possible, resources should be prioritized for individuals who can achieve financial independence to maintain housing stability. Because ongoing housing subsidies are extremely expensive, and the need for such resources is greater than the availability, it is important to transition households off housing subsidies and into financial independence whenever possible. The following strategies outline interventions and resources that cover the length of the continuum, from initial engagement of unhoused individuals to stable long-term housing.

### **Short-Term Interventions**

The first step in the continuum of homelessness to stably housed is making contact and connecting with those experiencing homelessness. This is not a one-time event, as it takes time to build trust and work through initial barriers or resistance before progress can be made. Below are several critical components needed for successful initial and follow-up contacts.

#### *Outreach and Case Management*

A unified street outreach approach is critical to ensure that those who are unsheltered are identified, directed to emergency shelter or other services, and receive ongoing engagement and case management. Outreach teams can be comprised of homeless service providers, law enforcement, mental health and substance use disorder professionals, and code enforcement staff. Pairing mental health professionals experienced in crisis management with law enforcement is an emerging best practice that can help triage the crisis and deescalate potential conflicts. A multi-disciplinary approach to assist individuals to move from the streets into emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing can better respond to the complicated and layered challenges faced by many people who experience homelessness.

Homeless outreach serves several different important functions. Outreach teams can help the City respond to community concerns and emergent needs, helping to address problems before turning into larger quality of life issues. The City's outreach team is vital for moving people off the streets into shelter, treatment, or some other needed intervention. The outreach team also provides personal necessities such as bus passes, water, and warm clothing in the winter when needed, as well as assistance in life-threatening environmental situations like periods of extreme cold or heat.

The primary function of the outreach team, though, is to connect with those experiencing homelessness, and to connect them to better options and be the first step on the path from unhoused to stably housed.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

It is important that the City ensure providers holding outreach services contracts are working towards the shared goal of reducing homelessness. This means that the homeless outreach teams must be coordinating and communicating with other outreach and homeless services providers through regular, effective case conferencing. It also means that outreach teams are securing the required documentation to place the appropriate housing and service referrals through the community's Coordinated Entry system and tracking relevant information in the Community Management Information System (CMIS). Data collected by outreach teams will be critical to inform decision making and resource allocation, so any entity contracted to provide outreach services must also be willing and able to participate in robust data collection efforts. Currently, two social workers from Spokane Valley Partners and one Spokane Valley Police officer provide outreach services in Spokane Valley. However, this team provides these services only four days during the week. These efforts could be expanded to provide services seven days a week by funding a second outreach team.

The current 211 system or a future Housing Crisis Hotline could be another option for first outreach contact with those experiencing homelessness. Through a hotline, callers could get direct information and referrals to needed services like emergency shelter or treatment options. Improved advertising of the current 211 resource and ensuring it is widely available would be a relatively simple way to help direct some people to first-step resources.

### Emergency Shelters and Hoteling

While outreach teams are key for first contacting and engaging people experiencing homelessness throughout the community, there needs to be a place for the people to go if they are to move along the continuum from homeless to stably housed. While Spokane County offers a variety of shelter options, none are located in the City of Spokane Valley.

Since data collection for the City began in May 2022, we have learned that about 50% of the homeless individuals contacted by our outreach team were last housed in Spokane Valley, which may be why many of them prefer to stay here. For these individuals, the distance to resources and separation from their community is a major deterrent to using existing shelter options that are located outside of the City. There are others who actively avoid the City of Spokane's downtown core, where most shelter and other resources are located, due to concerns for safety and drug use/availability.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, as evidenced by the 2022 and 2023 Point In Time (PIT) counts, the number of the unhoused individuals in Spokane County exceeds the number of available beds, which means there are often challenges finding available bed space, especially during cold winter months.<sup>12</sup>

The City adopted regulations governing placement and operation of emergency shelters in chapter 19.45 of the Spokane Valley Municipal Code. Emergency shelters are allowed in the Commercial Mixed Use, Mixed Use, Regional Commercial, Industrial Mixed Use, and Industrial zones, and cannot serve more than 20 individuals at any given time. These services must also be at least one mile apart from any other emergency shelter, emergency housing, or Transitional Parking location. Chapter 19.45 SVMC was designed to mitigate many of the negative externalities that stem from overcrowded low-barrier shelters.

---

<sup>11</sup> During the 2022 PIT count, 44% of unsheltered respondents indicated that "safety/fear of violence" was a primary reason for not accessing the regional shelter system.

<sup>12</sup> [Point in Time 2022 - Draft \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

The aim is to create smaller, more manageable, and less chaotic shelters that also have less of an impact on the communities where the shelters are located.

An intermediary step to year-round emergency shelter would be a temporary version established in response to an emergent and time-limited threat to public safety. Typical scenarios for temporary emergency shelter would include excessive heat or smoke in summer months, and dangerously cold temperatures in winter months. Setting up a temporary shelter for winter months or during extended summer heat/smoke events would be less expensive than a year-round shelter option and could be a good starting point for the City's shelter system. Such a temporary shelter could also be employed for other less common reasons, such as sheltering residents after a fire or other natural disaster.

Chapter 19.45 SVMC also allows the City Manager to authorize the operation of a temporary emergency shelter for up to 30 days in situations where an immediate life, health, or safety concern exists due to unanticipated or severe environmental conditions. The city manager may authorize an extension to the 30 days for a specified period of time, if the city council has adopted a resolution pursuant to Chapter [38.52](#) RCW declaring that the conditions which gave rise to the operation of the temporary emergency shelter continue in effect, and constitute a threat to the life, health, and safety of the residents of the City. **Temporary emergency shelters authorized by SVMC [19.45.050](#) are not subject to the requirements of Chapter [19.45](#) SVMC.**

Emergency hoteling is an option to provide vulnerable individuals with immediate shelter when health and safety are at risk. This option is particularly important during winter months when cold temperatures create deadly conditions for those who are unhoused. A hotel can also be a critical tool to get someone into a safe space immediately while providing time for follow-up case management to occur, such as in cases where someone may be in danger if they remain on the street or enter into a congregate shelter. Hoteling is one tool employed by the YWCA to serve households fleeing violence and Family Promise to keep families out of shelters. This strategy should only be used for special circumstances and for short periods of time because of its high cost.

### Day Drop-In Center

Day drop-in centers are the final component of a responsive and comprehensive shelter system providing a space for unhoused individuals to find rest, resources, and services in one location. It is key to recognize that a shelter, whether overnight, temporary, or day drop-in, is a place where outreach workers and case managers can connect with those in need of services and make progress towards housing goals.

Day drop-in centers can also provide critical services such as showers, laundry, and gear storage. According to data collected by the City's outreach team, approximately 10% of those experiencing homelessness in Spokane Valley are employed. For this group, or for those who are looking for employment, applying for housing, or even just seeking to attend appointments, the ability to be clean and wear clean clothes is a requirement for success. Additionally, getting to a job or an appointment while carrying all one's belongings can be a serious challenge, especially if using public transportation. A day drop-in center can help to address this critical gap in services, while at the same time providing a needed emergency heating or cooling location during inclement weather.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

Providing a space where those experiencing homelessness can be during the day to utilize services and connect with case management is not only important for helping to transition people out of homelessness, but it is also a benefit to area's retail locations, neighbors, and public facilities. A day drop-in center can help mitigate the impacts of loitering, or the use of public facilities like a library as a refuge when no other options exist.

### *Transitional Parking/Camping*

Transitional parking or camping sites concentrate needs and services into fewer locations to make meeting the outreach goals of contact and follow-up more feasible. Currently, individuals who live in vehicles are continually on the move to avoid issues; or if they do not move regularly, they can become a nuisance causing safety and health concerns for nearby neighbors or businesses.

Illegal encampments present similar issues where individuals camp at out-of-the way locations in areas like the Dishman Hills or on Department of Natural Resources (DNR) property near Mirabeau Meadows. The accumulated trash and hazardous waste are a serious health and safety concern, creating an environment where nearby residents feel unsafe. In other cases, a person may choose to stay on the move, sleeping in doorways or other protected locations for one night at a time, leaving in the morning when the business opens, for example. In all these instances, locating individuals to offer and follow up with services is challenging.

The creation of transitional parking and allowable camping sites serves to accomplish several goals. Camping sites would be an option when there is no shelter space available. Transitional parking is beneficial as it allows for a temporary place for individuals living in vehicles to safely park until housing can be secured. There are significant benefits in terms of mitigation when multiple individuals are staying in a single area rather than multiple areas throughout the City. Toilets and trash collection are the two most obvious benefits of having a single location where homeless individuals are allowed to stay. The other important goal of this approach is to keep unhoused individuals in one place so that outreach, case workers, and medical teams can locate and engage, and begin building relationships necessary to make progress towards stable housing. When unhoused individuals are constantly on the move from one location to another, it is nearly impossible for service providers to locate and build a relationship with them, or to make progress towards housing goals.

Transitional parking or camping sites could pose safety issues, lead to crime and impact nearby residents and businesses if not run properly, rules are not enforced, etc. Steps can be taken to mitigate potential problems related to transitional parking or camping sites. First, City code limits the total number of people who could use such a site to 20, as well as dictating where and under what conditions such a program could operate. Trash collection and restroom access are requirements, along with an operations plan that includes outreach to surrounding property owners, provision of human and social services, a security plan, and a code of conduct that addresses threatening or unsafe behavior, substance use, safety, and cleanliness. Additional precautions for transitional parking and camping programs could include background checks for participants to ensure the safety of all clients and staff, and a registration system so that only those approved to participate in the program are allowed on-site.

Increased health, safety, and security concerns around sanctioned encampments are real. Local experience with sanctioned camps hosting hundreds of individuals has shown that the scale of the

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

intervention is important in mitigating potential negative community impacts. City codes limit the number of people that could potentially access such a service, making an encampment the scale of Camp Hope impossible in the City. The costs of sanitation and security for sanctioned encampments are significant, but they need to be considered in comparison to the sanitation and security costs that come with the status quo. Such programs bring challenges and require effective management to ensure that they do not become safety and health concerns, both for those receiving services and for the rest of the community. The choice is between completely unregulated camping and parking throughout the community as it exists now, and a regulated program with sanitation, security, and services provided on-site. Given these options, it may be a better use of limited resources and a more effective strategy to provide a location where the impacts of parking and camping can be mitigated, and service providers are able to build relationships and help move people out of homelessness.

### *Mental Health and Addiction Crisis Interventions*

The County's Crisis Stabilization and Withdrawal Management Center, located at 1302 W Gardener Avenue in the City of Spokane, is available for law enforcement or medical facilities to make direct referrals of individuals who may be in crisis and/or in need of withdrawal management services. This voluntary option has been a critical resource when the City's outreach team encounters someone who needs assistance with mental health and/or substance use disorders. Having an on-demand facility that can be accessed at any time has proven to be critical in responding to needs at the time they are presented, rather than making a referral for services at some point in the future where there's no certainty of follow-through. At the Crisis Stabilization Center, individuals are immediately connected with housing specialists and other case management assistance.

While this has been an important resource for the City's homeless response, it is not always available because the beds are often full, demonstrating the growing need for these types of interventions. In general, there is a lack of needed in-patient withdrawal management, addiction recovery and mental health resources for those experiencing homelessness. This problem was made worse when one of the County's few withdrawal management providers, American Behavioral Health Systems, lost its certification to operate in 2022. Other providers, like Sequoia Detox Centers, only accept private insurance or out-of-pocket payments, making it unaffordable for people experiencing homelessness.

Additionally, because the Crisis Stabilization Center is located near downtown Spokane, some Spokane Valley residents who could benefit from these services are reluctant to leave their community to access it, so a similar service located in Spokane Valley would help reduce barriers for some who might be willing to access these services.

### *Pet Boarding and Vehicle Storage*

When someone is ready and willing to enter stabilization, shelter, or housing, there can be a variety of obstacles that keep them from accessing services. Issues related to pets and vehicles can also present barriers to those willing to access services or housing interventions.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

For many people experiencing homelessness who have pets, giving them up to pursue services is not an option. While some shelters do allow pets, others do not. Stabilization/treatment programs do not allow pets, and many housing options only allow pets if they are documented service or emotional support animals and have all the required shots and licenses. Providing options for pet “foster care” that can look after someone’s pet while they go into treatment or stay in a shelter can reduce a barrier that might otherwise keep a person from accessing needed care. Likewise, assistance with obtaining necessary certifications and paperwork, or providing needed medical treatment and vaccinations are also important for removing barriers for people seeking housing with their pet. SpokAnimal’s Guardian Angel program can provide these types of needed services, but capacity is often a limiting factor. Entering into an agreement with a provider to offer these services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Spokane Valley as needed would help address this barrier.

Vehicle storage for those entering stabilization or treatment is also a challenge that can present a barrier to those interested in accessing services. Often a vehicle is the last asset someone experiencing homelessness may have, and it can be critical for attending appointments, performing job search, and obtaining and maintaining employment. Additionally, a vehicle may be temporarily serving as someone’s home, which makes giving it up to seek needed services an even bigger barrier. Storing vehicles for people in treatment can present challenges related to security, access, and liability. But addressing this barrier can be critical for someone who is unwilling to give up a vehicle in exchange for seeking services.

### Youth/Family Services

Community stakeholders have expressed a need for a location to serve area youth, specifically older youth. The Central Valley School District (CVSD) operates a Student and Family Engagement Center (SFEC) that provides a wide variety of services and resources to children and their families. This program is intended for families from the CVSD and operates on limited hours during summer break.

CVSD’s SFEC is a valuable program for families experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The SFEC provides a technology center, clothing and food bank, community room for recreation and community gatherings, laundry services, and parenting classes. A similar site that serves families outside of the CVSD, or additional funding to the SFEC that would allow it to serve families throughout Spokane Valley, would aid hundreds of families that are on the margins.

A dedicated site that provides a safe and healthy environment for older youth is needed in support of prevention efforts, which are the primary focus of the SVHAP. This center could also provide internet access, homework assistance, and case management to assist with housing, food/clothing, transportation, and legal needs. “In-reach” workers work inside schools to identify and support youth facing homelessness. Volunteers of America (VOA) is the current provider of in-reach services in Spokane County. While this work does include Spokane Valley, increased staffing is needed to meet the demand and need in our City’s schools for these services.

In 2022 there were 780 homeless students in Spokane Valley, of which 168 were unaccompanied by any family or guardian. A dedicated in-reach position for Spokane Valley youth is needed to best serve these children and their families. Family Promise of Spokane began a contract in 2023 to pilot “in-reach” school-based case management positions at University High and East Valley High to work with students and their families experiencing homelessness or housing instability. This is a positive step for serving

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

Spokane Valley children and their families. Dedicating space and resources (including “in-reach” positions) are critical as part of up-stream interventions that will benefit Spokane Valley youth, as well as have a positive impact on long-term trends related to homelessness in our community.

Services that are focused on stabilizing families with children and homeless youth are critical for an up-stream approach that seeks to reduce future homelessness by providing needed interventions early in a child’s life. Children who live through homelessness are at much greater risk of having traumatic experiences that are associated with a variety of negative outcomes, including future homelessness as an adult. Not only is it far better for the health and wellbeing of children to address housing instability early on, but it is also better for the community that deals with the long-term implications.

### Relocation Assistance

When stable housing is available in another community, but lack of resources makes it impossible for those experiencing homelessness to access that housing, relocation assistance programs can play a critical role. The County’s Homeward Bound program, and the Centralized Diversion Fund managed by SNAP, provide examples of local relocation assistance programs. The County’s program, which was a pilot with limited funding attached, found an average cost of \$383.04 per client served, and a recidivism rate of 8%. This cost per client is far below any other permanent housing intervention funded in the current homeless response system. Assisting people who would like to relocate is one of the cheapest and most effective way to assist individuals obtain permanent housing. The City has set aside \$10,000 for its own relocation program.

### **Medium-Term Interventions**

Initial engagement and relationship building are the first pieces of the continuum from unhoused to stable housing. Stabilization and transitional housing are the next pieces. Once contact has been made, shelter has been provided, and a connection to relevant service providers has been made, the next goal is to transition the individual to medium-term housing solutions where they can stabilize and turn their attention to next steps that are needed to achieve long-term housing stability.

### Transitional Housing Providers

Transitional Housing (TH) is defined as a project that provides housing and supportive services to homeless persons or families, or other displaced individuals or families in need of protective shelter, for up to two years with the purpose of facilitating homeless or otherwise displaced persons and families into independent living. Detention and post-detention facilities, hospitals, psychiatric and/or substance abuse and secure community transition facilities are not considered Transitional Housing.

TH can take different forms and target different populations. For example, some TH providers serve families and others may target men with a history of incarceration or substance use disorders. TH is not emergency shelter but is also not a long-term housing solution. TH provides people with an opportunity to make progress towards goals related to long-term housing stability such as building a positive rental

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

history, securing needed documentation, obtaining employment, accessing treatment interventions, and practicing living in a space close to other tenants.

Many TH services require tenants to pay rent, but generally at costs below average market rates. While tenants are required to sign a rental agreement, these agreements are not a traditional lease and do not confer the same protections. For example, most THs are “clean and sober” locations so a tenant can be forced to leave for using alcohol, something that would not be possible with a traditional lease.

TH generally includes access to additional supportive services to assist tenants in making progress towards long-term housing goals. Some innovative models pair housing with programming, job training, and supportive services. The Reclaim Project manages a non-profit network of clean/sober houses that includes health and wellness programming, alongside a for-profit contracting business. This model serves hard-to-house program participants by combining an accessible and healthy living option with job training and income. The need for this type of programming is evidenced by the rapid growth of the program, and extremely low vacancy rates for their housing.

### Bridge Housing

The Salvation Army’s Way-Out Bridge Housing Program (TWO) provides shelter and services to individuals who are stable and ready to move forward with housing and other long-term goals. Sobriety and self-care requirements make this a high-barrier option that is not available for those who may be struggling with substance use disorders or who are living with significant disabilities. This option provides a relatively calm and orderly environment for those who are ready to find employment or who are applying for housing. This service is not a good fit for many of the unsheltered homeless individuals living in the City, but it has proven to be useful and effective for those who are able and willing to comply with the program’s requirements. Like the Stabilization center, TWO provides housing navigation and other case management to help clients successfully plan for next steps.

Because TWO is located near downtown Spokane, some Spokane Valley residents who could benefit from this service are reluctant to leave their community to access it. Additionally, because this service does not allow animals, some clients are reluctant to enter a program that would require them to give up their pet. Creating a partnership with a local animal shelter to temporarily house animals for those seeking treatment or transitional housing would help increase the number of individuals who could take advantage of this option.

### Homeless System Housing Referrals

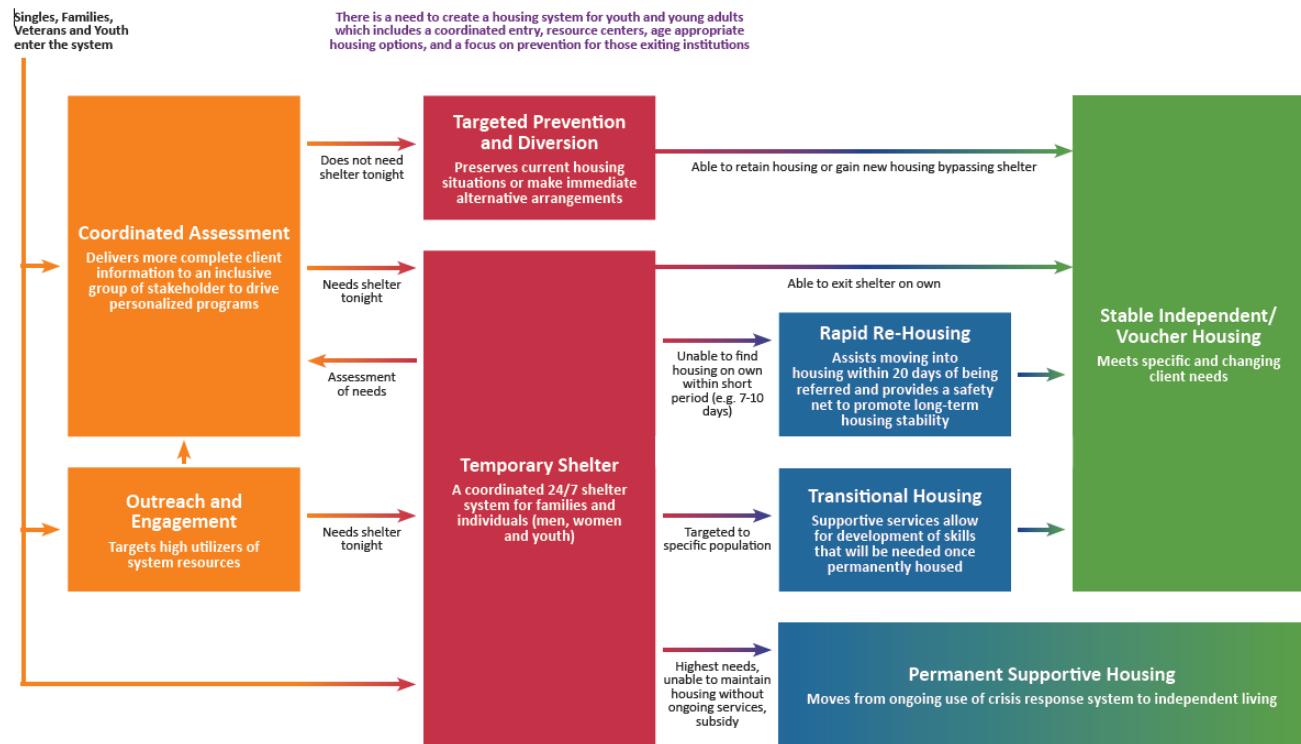
Other medium-term options are accessed through the community-wide Coordinated Entry (CE) system. Housing and homeless programs that receive federal, state, county, or municipal funding from the City of Spokane, whether directly or as a pass-through, are required to participate in the regional Coordinated Entry system and submit/accept referrals through the Community Management Information System (CMIS). This includes the Salvation Army’s Way-Out Bridge Housing program, rapid re-housing programs that provide short-term move-in and rental assistance, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing programs.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

Ensuring that access to the CE system is available through outreach teams or a Valley-specific resource hub, and that Spokane Valley residents who need it are receiving referrals for appropriate housing interventions, is critical to help unhoused individuals make progress on the continuum from homeless to stably housed. Housing referrals through CE can be placed by outreach teams, shelter providers, case managers for transitional parking/camping sites, day drop-in center staff, or by youth/family service providers.

These housing referrals are one important tool for helping those who are unhoused to access stable housing and begin making progress on other stability-related goals. Most housing options accessed through CE (apart from permanent supportive housing) provide medium-term assistance. After a period of time, the tenant is expected to take over responsibility for the rent payment, or transition to other long-term housing. These interventions are designed to help provide an intermediary step towards long-term housing stability.

### The Coordinated Entry System Map:



### Long-Term Interventions

Long-term solutions to reducing existing homelessness are essentially the same as the strategies needed to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place as outlined in section A of this plan. Below are

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

several additional strategies that are often used specifically, although not exclusively, to assist those coming out of homelessness.

### Foundational Community Supports

Foundational Community Supports (FCS) is a program offering supportive housing and supported employment assistance for Apple Health-eligible beneficiaries with complex needs. Amerigroup Washington, Inc. works with housing and employment providers to help clients find and maintain jobs; acquire stable, independent housing; and gain the necessary skills to be successful. Most of the houseless individuals encountered by the City's Outreach team are eligible for this program, although there is a process for requesting and receiving approval that can take up to several weeks before assistance can begin.

Once approved for services, FCS Housing Specialists can work directly with clients to make progress on any needed goal related to long-term housing stability, including housing assessments, identifying housing resources, support obtaining a lease, independent living skills development, landlord relations, and crisis management. FCS Employment Specialists can assist eligible clients by providing vocational/job-related discovery or assessment, planning for employment, job placement, development and coaching, and building skills for negotiating with prospective employers.

Supportive housing and employment services under FCS are managed by a single statewide third-party administrator (TPA) contracted by the Healthcare Authority — Amerigroup Washington, Inc. Providers of FCS services contract with the TPA and are reimbursed on a fee-for-service basis. This means that FCS services could be added as an additional resource to programs already operating in the City, or as a stand-alone service. In either case, working to make sure this resource is available for Spokane Valley residents will provide additional support for those seeking housing and employment assistance.

### Housing Vouchers

Housing vouchers, currently provided through the Spokane Housing Authority, are another tool that can help promote housing stability. These vouchers provide ongoing rental assistance for qualifying individuals. Some of these vouchers come in the form of units that are set aside for this specific use (Project Based Vouchers), while others provide rental assistance to tenants who can find their own unit within the market-rate rental environment (Section 8 vouchers). The primary constraints for use of these vouchers are two-fold. First, there is a long waiting list for those who are eligible to receive a voucher. And second, just because someone has received a voucher does not mean they can necessarily find a unit that will accept the voucher. With increasing rental rates region-wide, vouchers often are not able to cover the cost of rent. Additionally, some landlords are unwilling to rent units to those who hold a voucher. It is illegal to discriminate against those who use a housing voucher, but it does still occur. These constraints aside, housing vouchers can be one important tool in helping eligible households find housing stability.

Making sure that these programs have a footprint in Spokane Valley to help connect our residents with this resource is critical. Additionally, encouraging housing developments to set aside a given number of units for voucher holders is also critical to ensure there are sufficient units available.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### Hotel/Motel Conversion

One strategy to create additional affordable units for those transitioning out of homelessness and/or in permanent supportive housing is to purchase and convert existing hotels/motels into units suitable for long-term tenancy. The Department of Commerce has made funding available for this specific purpose through a rapid capital housing acquisition program.

The benefit of converting existing hotels/motels into permanent housing is that it takes far less time than constructing a new building, and rehabilitation of an existing property is also generally much less expensive than new construction. Additionally, hotels/motels are generally already located close to public transportation and other services. Converting hotels/motels can be doubly beneficial as it provides needed units for those transitioning out of homelessness while also improving blighted or nuisance properties. The challenge of hotel/motel conversion comes from the ongoing operations and maintenance costs associated with this type of housing. This type of transitional housing needs to be paired with robust services to ensure those transitioning out of homelessness have the support they need to be successful, and to help hold people accountable.

The ongoing costs of service provision and maintenance need to be factored into any plan for hotel/motel conversion. While there are few local examples to gather data, there is evidence that hotel conversion projects contribute to increased needs for security in the area around a project. The additional security costs and implications for neighborhoods and businesses need to be better understood and considered when implementing this strategy.

### **C. Improve Quality of Life:**

Improving quality of life for both housed and unhoused Spokane Valley residents is the third objective in this plan. Homelessness creates significant negative impacts for both those who are unhoused as well as the surrounding community where they may be located. Substance abuse, mental and physical health issues, and personal safety are critical issues facing those who are unhoused, while the surrounding community may see increased garbage and litter from encampments, increased crime, and loss of use of community facilities that are taken over by encampments. The third objective focuses on improving the quality of life and reducing the negative impacts for those experiencing homelessness as well as the surrounding community.

### **Day Drop-In Center**

Currently, there are not day-time shelter space located within the City, or that is specifically dedicated for use by homeless within Spokane Valley. As a result, the City's homeless population generally congregates along business corridors, parks, riverbanks, and other areas of both public and private open space. Further, given recent legal developments, the lack of available dedicated space can present difficulties for enforcement of the City's regulations governing use of public spaces. Providing a safe space for individuals experiencing homelessness to go during the day could benefit both the larger community and businesses as loitering and other related issues such as littering, property crime, and used drug paraphernalia will be

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

reduced to fewer locations. Those accessing the drop-in center can more easily be connected with services and case management needed to move them towards housing.

Day drop-in centers provide the needed support that people experiencing homelessness require to access a variety of resources including:

1. Health care coverage, food assistance, etc.;
2. Permanent housing referrals;
3. Emergency shelter referrals;
4. General case management services;
5. Employment services; and
6. Disability assistance

In addition to connecting individuals to resources critical for exiting homelessness, day drop-in centers also provide a critical space for those who are unsheltered during hours when many overnight shelters require patrons to remain off-site. Many overnight shelters require patrons to leave during daytime hours and check in each evening to secure a bed for the night. Some shelters even require that patrons leave the immediate surrounding area during daytime hours. This presents a serious problem for shelter patrons who have nowhere they can go during the day, especially for those with health and mobility issues and during winter months or inclement weather events. Day drop-in centers are also a benefit for communities near shelter locations, which often struggle with the daily influx on sidewalks, parking lots, and parks, of shelter patrons who are required to vacate their primary residence each day.

The City has adopted regulations governing placement and operation of day drop-in centers and similar emergency shelters in chapter 19.45 of the Spokane Valley Municipal Code. Generally, such uses are allowed in the FMR, CMU, MU, RC, IMU, and I zones, and cannot serve more than 20 individuals at any given time. These services must also be at least one mile apart from any other emergency shelter or emergency housing service.

## **Encampment and Trash Clean-Up**

The City is committed to cleaning up homeless encampments and trash on City-owned properties. Additionally, the City is active in various clean-up efforts within the City on both public and private property. The City actively works with the Department of Transportation, Department of Natural Resources, local water districts, Spokane County Parks, and Union Pacific/BNSF Railroads to enforce clean-up of camps and trash on their properties in and around the City. However, when cooperation is not effective, code enforcement has played an important role in compelling partnering agencies and private landowners to address trash and camping on their properties. City staff have regularly assisted in these clean-up efforts to support our partners as they struggle to address encampments and trash on their properties.

The City provides several avenues for residents to contact City staff regarding encampments, shopping carts, and trash. The City's provides a web portal to allow citizens to report homeless or trash issues to the City. The complaint form is currently located at <https://www.spokanevalley.org/311> . The City provides contact information through the resource guide distributed to partners and residents, as well as through City and partner websites and through walk-in inquiries. City staff regularly fields calls and

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

website submissions from concerned residents related to encampments and trash, and will continue to provide timely and effective responses to community concerns related to this issue.

The City has also created a phone app used by the City housing and homeless team, code enforcement and law enforcement to document encampments and trash. This tool allows users to log a location and status of a specific site, such as an occupied camp, abandoned camp, or trash. The app tracks which camps have received 48-hours notice to vacate, which sites are ready for cleanup, and which sites have been cleaned up. This is a valuable tool for documenting issues that need to be addressed, and also improving our understanding of where common encampment 'hot spots' are within the City.

### **Business Community Outreach and Information**

In response to conversations with local businesses and the Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce, the City has developed a guide for businesses of best practices and tools to address the impacts of homelessness. This resource includes two areas of focus. The first is information about preventative measures a business can take to mitigate potential impacts. The second has to do with tools that business owners can use when they encounter problems on their property related to homelessness, such as using the City's reporting tools to get follow-up from the homeless outreach team when needed. This guide will be distributed to all businesses working with the Valley Chamber, helping to expand the reach of the City's outreach efforts with local businesses to address the concerns they face related to homelessness.

In partnership with the Valley Chamber, the City will continue to organize informational events with community stakeholders to express concerns, receive information, and build alliances. An intentional and ongoing effort to engage stakeholders throughout the community, including businesses, is a critical piece of the effort to mitigate quality of life concerns related to homelessness.

### **D. Government and Legislative Advocacy:**

One final objective of this plan is to advocate for robust and ongoing legislative advocacy at local, state, and federal levels. Many times actions taken at the Federal or State level, whether legislative or in the courts, have a significant impact on how local governments can plan and implement important actions. In 2018, a federal court ruling, *Martin v. City of Boise*<sup>73</sup>, set significant restrictions on enforcement of public loitering and camping laws, generally identifying consideration of shelter availability when enforcing certain criminal provisions related to homelessness.

At the State level, homelessness prevention and reduction has increased in importance, and more programs have been created and funding made available. However, in many cases the resources and funding come with requirements that not all agencies will want to agree to, such as weakening zoning laws and mandating certain types of housing.

Where appropriate the City should consider advocating for changes in state and federal law and for funding programs where such changes or funding support elements of this plan. The City should also

---

<sup>73</sup> 920 F.3d 584 (9th Cir. 2019).

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

consider regional cooperation and collaborative efforts to address homelessness as they may fit within the elements of this plan.

Some areas identified by Council that could be part of the City's legislative advocacy agenda include:

- Finding ways to reduce construction costs for priority forms of housing. While the City can make some changes at the local level impact construction costs, action is also needed at the state level to spur construction of needed units in our community.
- Dedicating larger portions of the Housing Trust Fund and other funding sources towards priority populations, such as low-income seniors who may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- Increasing funding and support for housing of individuals who have complex and ongoing needs. Permanent Supportive Housing is not sufficient for people with complex ongoing needs, and sufficient space does not exist in the current stock of assisted living options. Increasing housing support for such groups is critical, but reducing barriers for new providers to enter the field of complex long-term care is also critical.

## Conclusion

As stated in the introduction to this plan, the City's top priority is preventing homelessness from occurring in the first place whenever possible. It is the City's position that preventing homelessness is the most effective way to address this growing challenge. Focusing up-stream to address some of the root causes will help stem the inflow of those experiencing homelessness. Further, we believe that preventing homelessness from occurring in the first place reduces the amount of human suffering, trauma, and negative outcomes often experienced by those who live through homelessness.

However, we understand that homelessness does exist today, and that it results in significant personal and community costs for all those affected. If the City wants to reduce these costs on the community, it should also work to reduce existing rates of homelessness. To do this, the City needs to ensure sufficient access to short, medium, and long-term interventions that can help move people through the continuum of unhoused to stably housed. Bolstering available resources in any one of these areas would be a success, but without sufficient support and options along the entire spectrum, bottlenecks will occur and reduce our ability to achieve our objective of reducing homelessness.

A regional approach to addressing homelessness is necessary to make progress in this area. Homelessness is not the problem of a single jurisdiction and does not start or stop at the border between cities. The current system of competing governing bodies and priorities has led to a disjointed approach that can result in confusion, inefficiency, and criticisms. The entire region could benefit from the right coordinated approach. The City will continue to work collaboratively with area stakeholders to improve communication and collaboration around efforts to reduce homelessness. Additionally, the City will continue to plan and implement our own plan for addressing homelessness within our own borders.

## **Supporting Data – Current Status as of 2023**

Before understanding the scope of need or being able to identify actions within the three primary objectives, the existing status of those experiencing homelessness, the number, type, and location of services available within the City and surrounding region, and available funding need to be understood.

### **A. Measuring Homelessness and Housing Instability:**

Getting an accurate count of how many individuals are experiencing homelessness and housing instability in our community at any given time is a challenge. The itinerant nature of homelessness and instability combined with lack of resources means those experiencing homelessness or instability are often constantly on the move. Those living in vehicles often find out-of-the way places to park to avoid conflicts, making it difficult to get an accurate count. Individuals or families who are doubled-up, couch surfing, or living in hotels are often overlooked and go uncounted. Those experiencing housing instability are at much higher risk of becoming homeless, or may lapse back and forth from unstably housed to homelessness as circumstances and weather change.

Because the City's homeless program is still new, we have not yet been able to collect sufficient data within our City limits to fully understand homelessness in our City. The apps that were developed are currently being used by the outreach team, and should be available to additional City partners in months to come, is an important step in the right direction. The data we have collected so far has proven useful in helping us understand homelessness in the City, and tracking our interactions and work with those we encounter. As we continue to make strides and collect more data about homelessness in the City, we will use the information to inform future planning and execution.

Despite these challenges, the City has collected data from several sources that help to inform our understanding of the scope of homelessness in our community. The following identifies information about the number of homeless within the City and greater Spokane region.

### **Annual Point In Time (PIT) Count**

The annual PIT count is a County-wide effort carried out over a five-day period each winter. Those who are sheltered (staying in a shelter) and unsheltered are counted. The 2023 PIT count found 2,390 homeless individuals in the County, a 36% increase over 2022. Of all those counted, 955 were unsheltered. This unhoused population represents a 16% increase over 2022 numbers, and a 76.5% increase since 2020. Of the 955 unhoused individuals counted in 2023, 80 were counted in Spokane Valley. Further, according to 2022 PIT data (the most recent year for which the more granular data is available), 13% of respondents indicated that the City of Spokane Valley was the last place they were housed before experiencing homelessness. The City participates in the effort by dedicating staff time and recruiting volunteers to ensure an accurate count of those experiencing homelessness in Spokane Valley.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### **State data on homelessness and housing instability**

Since 2014 the WA State Department of Commerce has produced the *Snapshot of Homelessness* report, which is designed to supplement the annual PIT count. The *Snapshot* report includes those who may not fit HUD's strict definition of homelessness, such as families doubled-up or youth who are couch surfing. These unstably housed groups are omitted from the annual PIT count. The *Snapshot* draws from data of those receiving public assistance, Medicaid-funded medical care, or housing services. According to the *Snapshot* report, in January of 2022 Spokane County had 16,946 households that were either homeless or unstably housed. This number bolsters the argument that the PIT is a significant undercount of those experiencing homelessness in our community.<sup>14</sup>

### **County-wide housing instability survey and rental assistance report**

The County's rental assistance programs also provide data to learn more about those experiencing housing instability in Spokane Valley. According to reporting from Spokane County, there were 2,448 households in Spokane Valley that received rental assistance through one of six recent assistance programs. The Zone in Northeast Spokane was recently commissioned to conduct a survey looking at housing instability in the county and received 1,476 responses. Of respondents who indicated they lived in a Spokane Valley zip code, 38% indicated they were worried about an eviction, 40% said they had taken out a loan to pay rent, and 62% had skipped paying two or more bills to pay rent.

### **School district statistics**

Spokane Valley school districts each have staff dedicated to counting and working with students who meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness. The HUD definition of homelessness only counts those who are literally homeless, in a shelter, or fleeing domestic violence; the McKinney-Vento Act counts those as homeless who are without a stable night-time residence. This would include students who are couch surfing with friends, living in hotels, or moving from location to location, either on their own or with family members. Using this metric, we know that in 2021-22 the City of Spokane Valley had 780 homeless students, at least 168 of whom were 'unaccompanied minors', meaning they were without any family support.

### **City data collection tools**

While the PIT Count and CMIS provide regional data about the number of homeless within the County, the City has developed several in-house tools to collect and track data related to homelessness to improve our understanding of the scope of homelessness within the City. One tool is used to perform short surveys to collect required data for funders, such as race, gender and income. Additional questions seek to learn when a person became homeless, where they were last housed, and if they identify any mental health or substance use issues. The tool also identifies a geographic location of where the data was collected. This tool helps the City gain a better understanding of how many people are experiencing homelessness in

---

<sup>14</sup> [GAO Report to Congress Finds Increase in Homelessness, Likely Undercount by HUD | National Low Income Housing Coalition \(nlihc.org\)](https://nlihc.org/resource/gao-report-to-congress-finds-increase-homelessness-lucky-undercount-hud)

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

Spokane Valley, who they are, how often we interact with them, and where they are located. This location-based information can quickly summarize the extent of homelessness in our community providing data to redirect services, funding, and resources as necessary.

Another tool is used to document camp locations (both occupied and abandoned), trash, vehicles (occupied or abandoned), or other quality of life concerns. This tool is available to City staff and relevant partners, such as the Spokane Valley Police Department and work crews to facilitate coordination of abatement where necessary.

### **Community Management Information System (CMIS)**

The CMIS system is the central database used to track and refer clients in the regional homeless system. Most service providers and funders, including the City, are part of the CMIS system. While some notable providers such as the Union Gospel Mission do not add data to CMIS, it is the primary source of data to understand how many people in the homeless community are accessing shelter, receiving housing referrals and housing placements, and to inventory for related services.

### **Outreach team feedback**

Finally, the City's Homeless Outreach Specialist and Outreach Officer provide critical insight into trends and activities related to homelessness within the City. These 'boots on the ground' are the primary way we contact unhoused individuals and connect them to services, and are critical for understanding the changes in patterns and trends related to homelessness in our community. They are also primarily responsible for gathering data through the City's collection tools.

## **B. Types and Causes of Homelessness:**

A University of Pennsylvania paper breaks homelessness down into three useful classifications that are often used when thinking about how to address the problem<sup>15</sup>: chronic, transitional, and episodic. These classifications, each defined by the duration of homelessness experienced and the range of supportive services needed, can be useful in identifying gaps in services and for prioritizing resources.

Chronic homelessness is defined by HUD as a person who has experienced homelessness continuously for at least 12 months, or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years, where the combined occasions total a length of time of at least 12 months. Chronic homelessness has a greater environmental and economic impact on cities than short term homelessness, and engenders more complaints and community concerns. When people think about homelessness, a person who could be classified as "chronically homeless" is often what comes to mind.

---

<sup>15</sup> Kuhn, R., & Culhane, D. P. (1998). Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization: Results from the Analysis of Administrative Data. Retrieved from [https://repository.upenn.edu/spp\\_papers/96](https://repository.upenn.edu/spp_papers/96)

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

Transitional homelessness is defined as a person experiencing homelessness for a short period of time, often as the result of a major life change or catastrophic event such as losing a job, a medical condition or domestic abuse. Those who are experiencing transitional homelessness may be employed but unable to pay rent, may be living in a vehicle, or might be staying briefly in a shelter or temporary housing system.

Episodic homelessness is defined as a person who has experienced homelessness for up to 60 days, has had two or more moves in the last 60 days, or who is likely to continue to be unstably housed because of disability or barriers to employment. Those experiencing episodic homelessness lap in and out of homelessness over a period of months or years.

Those working to address homelessness often refer to a fourth category as well, which is hidden homelessness. People experiencing hidden homelessness are in temporary living situations without clear plans to obtain stable, long-term housing. This would include people who are couch surfing, living in hotels, or doubled-up with family and friends. People in this situation are often missed, as they may not access homelessness resources and are not counted during the PIT. Realistically, we have no idea how many people in our community may fit into this category.

While giving an exact number of people in our community that may fit into one of the above categories is impossible, we do have data to help provide several estimates for consideration. According to the survey data collected by the City's Outreach Team, of the 359 different people who responded the question, some 70% reported being homeless for more a year or more, which means they would qualify as "chronically homeless". Only about 5% reported being homeless less than 30 days, and about 8.5% reported being homeless for between 30 days and six months. The remainder, 17%, reported being homeless for between six months and one year. These statistics are not surprising, as the Outreach Team is primarily focused on cases where people experiencing visible homelessness are sleeping in high-traffic locations.

Estimating rates of Transitional or Episodic homelessness are more complicated, as people in these categories are generally much less visible, and for far shorter periods of time. For estimates about these groups we can look to data from the Spokane Valley public school districts. Schools track children who experiencing homelessness, using the federal McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homelessness, which is any student who lacks a stable, primary night-time residence. These are cases of homelessness that often go unnoticed, as the children may be staying on a friend's couch or in a hotel, for example. According to this definition of homelessness, in 2022 there were 780 homeless students in Spokane Valley, of which 168 were unaccompanied by any family or guardian. Multiplying this number by all the non-school aged children and parents of these children, and we can estimate a number of several thousand Spokane Valley residents who meet this definition of homeless.

### **Lack of Housing that Spokane Valley Residents Can Afford**

Lack of housing options that are affordable for Spokane Valley's lower-income residents is also a significant contributor to homelessness. The Spokane region has been experiencing a housing crisis for years, with the supply of accessible housing falling far short of the documented need in our community. As a result, the cost for rental housing has increased significantly squeezing out many individuals and families who were already living on the margins. In 2021, rents increased by 23.8% in the region, with the

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

median price for a one-bedroom unit increasing to \$965, and \$1,327 for a two-bedroom unit<sup>16</sup>.

According to the City of Spokane Valley's (COSV) Housing Action Plan, in 2021, approximately 48% of Spokane Valley renters were cost burdened (paying more than 30% of income on housing), and 25% of renters were severely cost burdened (paying more than 50% of income on housing). A paper by the Federal Reserve indicates that families with children are most likely to be rent-burdened, followed by seniors. It further states “when households devote a large share of income to rent, an unexpected shortfall in income may leave them unable to pay rent and could lead to eviction. Moreover, households that have little income left after paying rent may not be able to afford other necessities, such as food, clothes, health care, and transportation. The large share of income required for housing also limits the ability to save and accumulate wealth.”<sup>17</sup>

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report in August of 2020 with a statistical analysis that found median rent increases of \$100 a month were associated with a 9% increase in homelessness in the areas they examined.<sup>18</sup> In their book, *Homelessness Is a Housing Problem*, the University of Washington professor Gregg Colburn and the data scientist Clayton Page Aldern demonstrate that “the homelessness crisis in coastal cities cannot be explained by disproportionate levels of drug use, mental illness, or poverty.” Rather, the most relevant factors in the homelessness crisis are rent prices and vacancy rates.<sup>19</sup> While the experience of coastal cities may not specifically address the situation in Spokane County, the finding that poverty, drug use, and mental illness are not the cause of growing homelessness in the region’s most populous cities does provide some added context and understanding of what we are experiencing in this City, as we have also seen rapidly increasing rent prices and historically low vacancy rates.

The University of Washington’s Washington Center for Real Estate Research has developed a Housing Affordability Indices (HAI) that looks at the extent to which housing is over or under priced when compared to incomes.<sup>20</sup> A Value of 100 on the HAI Index means that a household with a median income has exactly enough income to qualify for a mortgage on a median priced home. An index value above 100 indicates that a household earning the median income has more than enough to qualify for a mortgage on a median priced home. For example, a composite HAI of 115 means that a household earning the median family income, has 115% of the income required to qualify for a conventional mortgage. Alternatively, a value of 85.0 would indicate that the household only has 85% of the income required to qualify for a mortgage on a median priced home.

Graph A, taken from the 2023 PIT count data, shows the relationship between housing affordability and homelessness. As housing affordability (represented by the HAI line) decreases (becomes less affordable), homelessness (represented by the PIT line) experienced a corresponding increase.

---

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.apartmentlist.com/wa/spokane#rent-report>

<sup>17</sup> [“Assessing the Severity of Rent Burden on Low-Income Families: Larrimore, Jeff and Schuetz, Jenny, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.](#)

<sup>18</sup> [GAO-20-433, HOMELESSNESS: Better HUD Oversight of Data Collection Could Improve Estimates of Homeless Population](#)

<sup>19</sup> [The Obvious Answer to Homelessness - The Atlantic](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Housing Affordability Indices | \(uw.edu\)](#)

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

While many of the people experiencing homelessness in our region today may not have been in the market to purchase a home, we know that when households who would have previously been in a position to purchase are forced instead to rent, it puts added pressure on the rental market and drives rent costs up and vacancies down for everyone.<sup>21</sup> Many individuals experiencing homelessness receive Social Security/Disability or some other sort of monthly benefit, such as VA benefits, or are even employed. In fact, according to the City's own data collected between May and October of 2022, over 36% of the individuals experiencing homelessness in Spokane Valley, had some sort of income. While in the past a fixed income or the earnings for someone working a low-wage job may have been sufficient to pay for a modest one or two-bedroom apartment, the increase in housing market rates has priced many of these people out of the market and into homelessness.

Graph A:

---

<sup>21</sup> [Soaring home prices are pushing buyers to the rental market - Vox; 61% of renters in the US can't afford to buy a home in their city \(nypost.com\)](https://www.vox.com/realestate/2022/10/18/23303331/us-renters-can-t-afford-housing); [Concern Over Rent Ticking Time Bomb Sparks Creation Of New Schemes \(realestate.com.au\)](https://www.realestate.com.au/concern-over-rent-ticking-time-bomb-sparks-creation-of-new-schemes)

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### **Mental Health/Substance Use/Disabilities**

Many of the Spokane Valley homeless population suffer from mental illness, a substance use disorder, and/or some form of disability. Self-reporting data from the 2022 PIT count found that 31% of adults reported serious mental illness, versus 4% of Spokane County residents in 2020. Twenty-three percent of adults reported a substance use disorder, compared to an average of 9% state-wide between 2014-2017. These realities are related to homelessness for many of the unhoused members of our community. This underscores the need to address homelessness from an approach led by those with experience in trauma, addiction, and mental illness, such as specially trained social workers, working in conjunction with law enforcement. It also underscores the need for an approach that can help individuals address a wide range of needs when transitioning out of homelessness.

### **Family Conflict and Domestic Violence**

Family conflict has been identified as another significant contributor to homelessness, particularly among youth and young adults. Similarly, domestic violence is another major contributor to homelessness in our community. Homeless individuals are approximately ten times more likely to be survivors of domestic violence than the general population of Spokane County<sup>22</sup>.

### **C. Spokane County Shelter Network:**

A necessary component of planning is to identify existing resources. The following table describes existing shelters within Spokane County. Of note for this plan, there are currently no existing overnight shelters located within Spokane Valley.

Table A:

Spokane County Shelter Inventory				
Name/Location	Population Served	# Beds Available*	Entry Requirements**	Notes
House of Charity	Men & Women	158	Low barrier	23 beds are for respite and are set aside for contracted partners like Providence or Community Court.
Trent Resource and Assistance Center (TRAC) (owned by City of Spokane)	Men & Women	350	Low barrier	
Salvation Army Way Out Bridge Housing	Men & Women	60	High Barrier, by referral only	30 Phase II beds, and 30 Phase III beds

<sup>22</sup> Data from Spokane County's 2022 Point In Time Count

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

Truth Ministries	Men only	66	Low barrier	Check-in/check-out times. No pets allowed. The City contracts for two dedicated beds.
UGM	Men only	200	High barrier	60-day time-limit unless client is making progress on goals and working to get into another UGM program.
Hope House	Women only	100	Low barrier	80 beds are standard shelter beds, and 20 beds are set aside for respite and are held/paid for by partners who refer women with specific needs. 1 bed contracted/set aside for CoSV.
YWCA	Women & their children only	37	Only for those fleeing DV. Low barrier	Household makeup determines bed availability, so sometimes fewer than 37 beds available.
UGM	Women & their children only	222	High barrier	60-day time-limit unless client is making progress on goals and working to get into another UGM program.
St Margaret's Shelter	Families only	17 rooms	By referral only. Must have a child in custody at least 51% of time, or pregnant. Low-barrier	8 rooms are Transitional Housing rooms (up to 6 months) – prioritizes 18-24yo, or actively fleeing DV. 9 rooms are emergency shelter, w/30 daytime limit with possibility of extension.
Family Promise Emergency Shelter	Families only	104	Low-barrier	Currently seeking funding to expand capacity by 25 beds
Crosswalk	Teens only (13-17yo)	18	Low barrier	
Young Adult Shelter	Young adults only (18-24yo)	44	Low barrier	

\*Number of beds available has fluctuated with restrictions and additional funding related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

\*\*Low Barrier means there are no sobriety or referral requirements for entry. High Barrier shelters may require sobriety to access services and/or a referral.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### **D. Available Services:**

#### **Current City Positions/Contract Services**

##### *City Staff*

The City of Spokane Valley has been building a housing and homelessness program even prior to development of this plan. The Housing and Homeless (H&H) Coordinator position was created in 2021 and represented an acknowledgement of and investment in addressing the issue of homelessness within the City. Similarly, in 2022, the City created a full-time Homeless Outreach Officer position within the Spokane Valley Police Department and the City applied for and received a Spokane County Homeless Housing Assistance Act grant for a full-time Outreach Specialist. The Outreach Specialist is an employee of Spokane Valley Partners but works as a team member with the Homeless Services Officer and H&H Coordinator as part of the City's outreach team. These positions form the core of the homeless response team for the City.

Other City departments and staff also support the City's efforts to address homelessness. Code Enforcement regularly partners with the H&H Coordinator to address issues such as individuals sleeping in vehicles, encampments on private property, and clean-up of trash. The Street Division assists with locating and removing encampments under bridges or on other street infrastructure. The Economic Development Department assists with the creation and dissemination of materials such as resource guides and media releases related to homelessness and the City's efforts to address it.

##### *Contracted Services*

The City of Spokane Valley Police Department and Spokane Valley Fire Protection District No. 1 ("Spokane Valley Fire Department"), a separate municipal entity, each devote significant time and effort to dealing with issues related to homelessness in our community. From responding to Crime Check calls to providing critical medical interventions, community resources go to addressing the impacts of homelessness in our community every day. The dedicated Homeless Outreach Officer is specifically assigned to address concerns around homelessness, and the Crime Prevention Officer spends significant time working with businesses and residents to mitigate the impacts of homelessness on private property.

The City has committed to cleaning up camps and trash on city-owned properties. The City spends thousands of dollars annually contracting with work crews to remove camps and trash related to homelessness. A work crew from the Geiger corrections facility has been an important partner the City contracts with to perform this work. However, due to staffing issues and rules around when the Geiger crew is available, the City also contracts with local businesses like the Reclaim Project to perform this work.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### Regional Services

The City pays into the regional system that funds projects addressing homelessness county-wide. Through recording fees and other funding mechanisms, the City contributes a significant amount of funds each year that go to a variety of programs benefiting Spokane Valley residents. The following table details the programs funded and number of recipients served through Housing and Homeless Assistance Act (HHAA) funding, of which the City is the County's single largest contributing municipality.

Table B:

Jan 2020 - Dec 2021 HHAA Subrecipients	Beneficiaries Originating from the City of Spokane Valley	Total Verified County Beneficiaries Reported	Total Beneficiaries Reported from Unknown Locations	Grand Total Beneficiaries Reported (includes Unknown Locations)	% of verified/reported County beneficiaries served from CoSV
St. Margaret's Shelter, ES & TH Services	70	119	1,249	1,368	5.1%
Family Promise - Open Doors Shelter	52	70	1,356	1,426	3.6%
The Salvation Army ES & TH Services	33	62	212	274	12.0%
Volunteers of America Hope House	43	76	3	79	54.4%
Volunteers of America Crosswalk	300	456	0	456	65.8%
SNAP County Outreach	265	330	189	519	51.1%
YWCA Safe Shelter for Survivors and Children	59	107	0	107	55.1%
House of Charity Emergency Shelter	157	361	1,335	1,696	9.3%
Spokane Workforce Council Prevention	46	87	243	330	13.9%
Family Promise - Bridges Program	0	0	0	36	Subrecipient did not record/report location data
Total Beneficiaries Served by Area	1,025	1,668	4,587	6,291	16.3%

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

Looking at the data in Table C, it is important to acknowledge that over 4,500 beneficiaries were from unknown locations, and that the Family Promise Bridges Program did not collect or report this data. It is safe to assume, then, that some percentage of the recipients from unknown locations were also from the City, which would make the total of City residents served even greater than the 1,025 individuals identified in these numbers. Of the location-based services listed above (which does not include Outreach), only the YWCA has a site located within the City. This means that City residents seeking these services are required to navigate transportation and take additional time out of school or work, sometimes with children, to receive assistance.

## **Regional Collaboration**

The City recognizes that the City of Spokane, Spokane County, and non-profit providers are already providing services throughout the region. Accordingly, the City acknowledges the work already occurring and participates in a variety of the existing regional entities and efforts related to homelessness. Identification of existing regional and local efforts are critical so that the City's Plan does not overlap or create unnecessary duplication with existing services and solutions. The following list identifies certain key existing regional and local efforts related to homelessness:

- Spokane County: Spokane County administers a variety of housing funding programs, including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Homeless Housing Assistance Act (HHAA) funds through the Spokane County Housing and Community Development Advisory Committee (HCDAC). While the City is eligible to become an entitlement jurisdiction and to receive CDBG funds directly, it has not done so to date and relies on an interlocal agreement with Spokane County to assist in distribution of CDBG funds towards City projects and purposes. In order to provide City input in the distribution of CDBG funds, the City has four representatives on the HCDAC. While the City has representatives on the HCDAC, the City does not have direct control over the distribution of CDBG funds. As the SVHAP is implemented, the City might consider assuming direct control over CDBG funds in order to fund identified City programs or projects. The City also participates in distribution of Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) funding. The City has also participated in regional discussions about use of state funding to address homelessness on State-owned right-of-way property.
- Continuum of Care (CoC): The CoC is a regional planning board made up of service providers, elected officials, community members, educators, businesses and other stakeholders. Broadly, the purpose of the CoC is “to promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improve coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programs targeted to people experiencing homelessness; improve data collection and performance measurement; and allow each community to tailor its program to the particular strengths and challenges within that community.”<sup>23</sup> The CoC is responsible for administering all HUD funds related to homelessness that come to the county. It is also responsible for developing the region’s 5-Year Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. This plan lays out a roadmap

---

<sup>23</sup> [Introductory Guide to the Continuum of Care \(CoC\) Program \(spokanecity.org\)](http://spokanecity.org)

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

for a regional response to homelessness and provides guidelines that any program funded through HUD or applicable County dollars must follow when providing homeless services. City funds that go to the County to support homeless services are bound by the requirements laid out in the Plan. The City of Spokane is currently the CoC's "Collaborative Applicant," meaning they receive a portion of funding to provide much of the staffing and technical support for the CoC's funding applications, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting requirements. The H&H Coordinator is co-chair of the CoC's Singles Sub-Committee. This sub-committee, along with Veterans, Families, and Youth sub-committees, is one of four permanent sub-committees tasked with informing and making recommendations to the CoC regarding the region's response to homelessness. The City is also represented in the CoC with a board member selected from the City Council.

- Local groups/committees: The H&H Coordinator leads a monthly Valley Huddle meeting which brings together key stakeholders, including: Spokane Valley Police Department, Spokane Valley Fire Department, Spokane Valley Schools, Spokane Valley Partners, Spokane Valley Community Advocates, Catholic Charities, Volunteers of America, Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners, Frontier Behavioral Health, Washington State Parks, Department of Natural Resources, Washington Department of Transportation, Spokane Valley Parks, Spokane Regional Health District, United Way, Spokane Valley Library, Greater Good Northwest, Pioneer Human Services, interested Spokane Valley citizens, and others. The focus of these meetings is to discuss updates, challenges, and approaches to addressing homelessness in Spokane Valley. The City also participates in the Greater Valley Service Network, and regularly works with the Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce ("Valley Chamber") to provide information and address business concerns.
- Regional events and initiatives: The City has supported and participated in a number of regional events and initiatives related to homelessness. The City participated in planning and day-of implementation of the regional Homeless Connect event which connects people to services and supports the regional Point In Time Count effort. In 2022, the CoSV fully participated in the annual PIT count for the first time, recruiting volunteers and focusing on Valley-specific locations to ensure a more accurate count than in years past when Spokane Valley was largely overlooked.
- Collaboration with housing developers: The City has initiated conversations and developed relationships with housing developers like Spokane Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity, and Community Frameworks. The City recognizes that more housing options accessible to low-income households are needed in our community, and that it is critical to develop and move projects forward that can add needed units to the City's housing stock that are affordable for all income levels.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### **E. Available Funding:**

The following table outlines the different sources of revenue available to support programming to address homelessness:

Table C:

Funding currently collected by the City				
Funding Source	Funding Eligibility	Summary of Allowable Uses	Funding Amount collected/available (2021)*	Funding Access
Local Homeless Housing Assistance Act (HHAA) Recording Fees**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homelessness</li><li>• Affordable Housing</li></ul>	Affordable housing and homeless programs (capital; O&M; variety of services)		City will control/administer all HHAA dollars for its jurisdiction beginning in 2024.
Affordable and Supportive Housing Sales and Use Tax Credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Affordable Housing</li></ul>	0.0073% sales tax rebate for funding affordable housing	\$Approximately \$580,000 available now, and approximately \$222,000 additional per year.	Internally available for City use within State guidelines.
One-Time Funding				
American Rescue Plan Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homelessness</li><li>• Affordable Housing</li></ul>	Federal funds for COVID-19; assumes services provided for homelessness and increasing access to affordable housing	\$16,000,000	One-time funds only. Internally available for City use within Federal guidelines.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

<b>Funding currently collected by the County</b>				
Funding Source	Funding Eligibility	Summary of Allowable Uses	Funding Amount collected/available (2021)	Funding Access
Affordable Housing for All County Recording Fee Surcharge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Affordable Housing</li> </ul>	Primarily for affordable housing, can be used for shelter operating costs (no capital use); no direct City use – allows use by County through interlocal agreement.		The County allocates funds to participating cities for eligible housing activities pursuant to an interlocal agreement. The City must work with the County to enter into an agreement for use of these funds.
Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelessness</li> </ul>	Grants available for homeless programs		The City must apply to the County to access this funding.
<b>Available funding sources currently not collected/accessible</b>				
Funding Source	Funding Eligibility	Summary of Allowable Uses	Funding Amount collected/available (2021)	Funding Access
General Property Taxes (banked, levy lid lifts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Affordable Housing</li> </ul>	City discretion to raise general fund dollars for either affordable housing or homelessness purposes (capital; O&M; other services).	N/A	Would require Council to follow the normal levy-setting process, and requires no special procedure nor voter approval.
Affordable Housing Levy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable Housing</li> </ul>	Property tax of up to \$0.50 per \$1,000 assessed value for 10 consecutive years for affordable housing programs.	N/A	Council must first declare an emergency regarding the stock of affordable housing, then voters must approve the levy by a simple majority.
Sales and Use Tax for Housing Related Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Affordable Housing</li> </ul>	0.1% sales and use tax for funding affordable housing and emergency, transitional, and supportive housing. Can also use for mental and behavioral health-related uses.	N/A	The City may impose the tax by either a majority of persons voting, or through councilmanic action.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

REET II Funds to Support Affordable Housing and Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Affordable Housing</li> </ul>	<p>Authorization to use 25% or \$100,000 (whichever is greater) for capital projects related to affordable housing and homelessness.</p>	N/A	<p>The City may only use REET II funds for homelessness if it documents in its capital facilities plan that it has enough funds over the next two years for capital projects identified in state code, which include “planning, acquisition, construction, reconstruction, repair, replacement, rehabilitation, or improvement of streets, roads, sidewalks...storm and sanitary sewer systems”, etc.</p>
Housing Trust Fund Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Affordable Housing</li> </ul>	<p>Grants available to local governments for projects related to affordable housing or homelessness; priority given to non-profits and housing authorities.</p>	N/A	<p>To date the City has never received Housing Trust Fund dollars.</p>
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable Housing</li> </ul>	<p>Funds public improvements of designated areas, including the purchase, rehabilitation, retrofit for energy efficiency, and construction of affordable housing.</p>	N/A	<p>Must be established by Council ordinance. The TIF boundary area cannot be the entire city jurisdiction, and a jurisdiction cannot have more than two active TIFs at any given time.</p>

\*With the exception of one-time ARPA funding, HHAA funding beginning in 2024, and the Affordable and Supportive Housing Sales and Use Tax Credit, the City does not directly collect or distribute the funds listed in this table. More data is needed regarding available amounts as the City moves to implement the SVHAP.

\*\*These funds are passed to Spokane County through an interlocal agreement, and then distributed to programs that benefit the county at large, including the City of Spokane Valley.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### **F. Existing Goals Related to Homelessness :**

The City has already adopted several planning documents that include goals related to addressing homelessness. Among these documents are the City's Comprehensive Plan and Business Plan. Beginning with the goals in these plans can serve as a starting point for setting objectives for 2023 and beyond. What follows are goals related to addressing homelessness outlined in these existing plans.

In the Comprehensive Plan, the following goals are listed under the "Housing Goals" heading:

- H-G4: Work collaboratively with local stakeholders to develop a Homeless Response System specific to the needs of the Valley
- H-G5: Work closely with and support the Regional Homeless System and ensure continuity of care for community members that are unsheltered and unstably housed in the Valley and throughout our region

In the Comprehensive Plan, the following goals are listed under the "Housing Policies" heading:

- H-P8: Ensure the provision of homeless and housing services have commensurate on-site support to maintain the character of neighborhoods and minimize public service calls.
- H-P11: Engage in active recruitment of service providers that desire to serve Valley residents through targeted programs focused on homeless service delivery.
- H-P12: Support the implementation of the Continuum of Care Five-Year Strategic Plan to End Homelessness.
- H-P13: Continue as active members on regional committees that address homelessness and housing instability such as the Continuum of Care Board and the Housing and Community Development Advisory Committee.
- H-P15: Encourage and support new projects and programs which seek to assist in maintaining housing stability or provide exits from homelessness to housing.
- H-P16: Analyze and collect data through our local Community Management Information System and use this data to help drive homeless and housing policy

In the Comprehensive Plan, the following goals are listed under the "Approach to the Housing Element" heading:

#### *Co-Location of Homeless and Homeless Prevention Services*

The City of Spokane Valley has a strong network of various non-profits, faith-based organizations and school districts that help serve those who are facing housing instability as well as households that are unsheltered. What has historically been missing are locations in the City where access to these services are easily obtainable. Specifically, a high degree of reliance has been on the City of Spokane to physically house these services, which in turn requires City of Spokane Valley residents to travel when resources are needed. The City supports co-location facilities in its jurisdiction within close proximity of public transportation. These facilities would house various providers that seek to serve those experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

Additionally, such services should be well connected to existing systems of care within our region to encourage and support ease of referrals and reduction of duplication in services.

### *Supporting Affordable Housing for all Households*

The provision of Affordable Housing is critical to meet the needs of those households that have special needs or are on fixed incomes. Any build out of Affordable Housing in the City should align with existing programs and systems that seek to serve those that are unsheltered or unstably housed. The City should strive to work with regional providers to streamline and coordinate the distribution of limited resources.

In the Business Plan, the following goals are listed under the “Homelessness Oversight” heading:

- Work in conjunction with the City Attorney’s Office to revise and implement the City’s Camping Ordinance.
- Provide staff support to the Continuum of Care and the development of the 5-Year Plan to Prevent and End homelessness.
- Provide Staff Support for the Spokane County Housing and Community Development Advisory Committee and the development of the 5-Year Consolidated Plan.
- Collaborate with Spokane County and the City of Spokane to incorporate a transitional bridge shelter and young adult shelter into the regional homelessness system.
- Participate, review proposals, monitor, and evaluate performance of service providers receiving Homeless Housing Assistance Act funding from recording fees, Consolidated Homeless Grant funding, and Housing and Urban Development funding.
- Create, implement and manage a Spokane Valley Homelessness Huddle Team consisting of Police, Fire, Parks, City Attorney, Contract Administration and Homeless Outreach Services with the purpose of exiting individuals from homelessness and maintaining public space for intended uses by all citizens.
- Identify and engage with homeless individuals located in Spokane Valley, creating and maintaining a database of individuals and campsites allowing for effective and consistent outreach services.

Progress has already been made on some of these goals, such as managing the Homeless Huddle group, and collecting data on individuals experiencing homelessness and locations where it is occurring. Other goals are on-going, and do not have distinct ending points, such as supporting and participating in regional efforts through the Continuum of Care. Work in these ongoing areas will continue. Finally, some goals, such as the addition of new housing units that are accessible to low-income households in the City are long-term goals that will take years to make significant process.

## **G. Community Feedback**

The City has conducted several community outreach efforts to solicit feedback about priorities and preferences for action related to addressing homelessness in Spokane Valley. A survey conducted by the City in 2021 asked a number of questions related to residents’ experiences with homelessness in the

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

community, and their preferences for possible services and interventions. The survey received 318 responses. A Community open house in March 2023 attracted over 60 participants to prioritize strategies.

### **Results From The Community Survey**

Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### **Priorities Identified At The Community Open House**

Attendees of the community open house were asked to give feedback of the draft Homeless Action Plan. As part of this process, they were given an opportunity to prioritize from a list of possible interventions and programs related to the three primary goals of the plan: Prevent homelessness, reduce existing homelessness, improve quality of life for all Spokane Valley Residents. A number of the strategies described overlap between several of the goals.

Increasing housing availability and affordability, for example, is relevant to both preventing homelessness from occurring, and reducing existing levels of homelessness. The following strategies were highlighted as priorities by those who attended the open house:

#### *Short-Term Interventions – Make Contact and Form Connections – 170 votes*

The creation of a day drop-in center inside the City, and support for mental health and addiction crisis interventions received 46 votes each. Creating a day drop-in center falls under reducing homelessness as it creates a space to connect with people and follow-up on needed services. It also falls under improving quality of life because it would create a space for those experiencing homelessness to be during the day instead of in businesses, or public facilities like the library. While expanding mental health and addiction crisis interventions is critical for

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

reducing existing levels of homelessness, it would also be an important tool to helping some people avoid becoming homeless.

In this category outreach and case management received 33 votes, and youth/family service centers received 20 votes.

### *Increase Housing Availability and Affordability – 72 votes*

Within this category of interventions, the specific strategy of “Relax[ing] codes to allow for more types of housing in more areas, including off-street parking requirements that increase the cost of new developments” receiving 26 of the 72 votes. Increasing housing availability and affordability falls under both the goal of preventing homelessness, and the goal of reducing existing homelessness. Ensuring that people on fixed incomes or working lower-wage jobs can afford to stay in their homes is critical to stemming the future tide of homelessness. And ensuring that there are units that those working their way out of homelessness can afford when they are ready is necessary if we are to reduce existing levels of homelessness.

Requiring new multi-family developments to include a certain percentage of affordable units was the next highest vote-getter in this category, receiving 9 votes.

### *Develop Supportive Housing Options – 44 votes*

The third most popular category of interventions had to do with providing more housing options to support those that need higher levels of assistance to remain stably housed. This group included Permanent Supportive Housing for individuals living with disabilities who also have a history of chronic homelessness and require more ongoing on-site case management (18 votes), as well as assisted living options for those with physical or mental impairments (16 votes for non-senior housing, 10 votes for senior-specific housing).

### *Increase Income – 41 votes*

Helping residents increase their income through targeted job training and placement received 18 votes. Connecting them with Foundational Community Supports services to provide ongoing employment and housing support (similar to job and housing-specific case management) received 14 votes. And Helping those eligible for some sort of benefits like disability, veterans, or retirement benefits to connect to and receive those benefits received 9 votes.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### Medium-Term Interventions to Reduce Homelessness – 37 votes

In this category of intervention there were three different strategies described: Utilizing the current homeless system housing referrals through Coordinated Entry (20 votes), bridge housing, which is generally high-barrier clean & sober shelters (9 votes), and transitional housing, which is generally also clean & sober housing but can last for up to two years while a person builds a rental history, employment, etc. (8 votes).

### **SVHAP Feedback Outreach List**

This Plan was shared with representatives of the following stakeholders:

- Spokane Valley Partners
- Spokane Valley Fire Department
- Goodwill Industries of the Inland Northwest
- Spokane Valley Police Department
- Washington Department of Transportation
- Spokane Valley Parks Department
- Washington State Parks
- Volunteers of America
- Catholic Charities Eastern Washington
- Frontier Behavioral Health
- Spokane County Library District
- Spokane Valley Community Advocates
- United Way
- Spokane Dream Center
- Greater Valley Support Network
- Central Valley School District
- East Valley School District
- West Valley School District
- Continuum of Care board
- Jewels Helping Hands
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources
- SNAP
- Family Promise
- Reclaim Project
- Community Frameworks
- Habitat for Humanity
- Allusion Opps LLC
- Hello for Good
- Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Truth Ministries
- Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium
- Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund
- League of Women Voters
- YWCA
- Greater Good Northwest
- Providence
- Empire Health Foundation
- Spokane Housing Authority
- Spokane Valley community members involved with the monthly Valley Huddle
- City of Spokane homeless services staff
- Homeless Coalition

Feedback was received from the following stakeholders:

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

- Volunteers of America
- Washington State Parks
- Family Promise
- SNAP
- Continuum of Care board, including Singles and veteran sub-committees
- Community Frameworks
- Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Goodwill Industries of the Inland Northwest
- Greater Valley Support Network
- Spokane Valley Police Department
- Spokane Valley Partners
- Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium
- League of Women Voters
- City of Spokane homeless services staff
- SpokAnimal
- Community open house event with 60+ attendees
- Multiple Spokane Valley residents

### **H. 2023 Work Plan Activities**

While the SVHAP outlines a variety of needs, priorities and long-term or ongoing goals related to addressing homelessness in Spokane Valley, a set of short-term objectives or work plans for 2023 is needed to help guide work and make progress towards the longer-term goals. In 2023, short-term objectives include:

### **Award ARPA funding for Housing & Homelessness purposes**

Through the City's ARPA awards it is focused on bringing needed services and housing options to Spokane Valley and supporting regional efforts that address ongoing needs. The City Council has identified priorities for the ARPA funds, and City resources more generally. These priorities are preventing homelessness from occurring in the first place when possible, and support for families with minor dependents and for youth.

With these priorities in mind, the Council awarded ARPA funds to the following agencies, in order of award size:

#### *\$1,460,000 to Reclaim Project*

The City has been expanding its partnership with Reclaim over the past year, and this ARPA award is a part of that growing relationship. The award will pay for two Transitional Housing locations in Spokane Valley for men, for the initial loan payment of a home base location in Spokane Valley, and several years of program staffing. With the for-profit component of the organization, after this initial investment it is anticipated that business income will be sufficient to fund all future programming. The City already contracts with Reclaim to provide weed abatement, graffiti removal, and clean-up services. The home base will not only serve as a location for programming

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

like sobriety-based social groups, but will also provide a base of operations for their Valley work crews. Reclaim's Transitional Housing provides clean/sober living for the men in their program, and the for-profit work crews provide employment opportunities and purpose. The combination of accountable, community-focused housing along with employment has shown great results, and is in line with the City's philosophy of providing opportunities for those seeking to better their situation. There are already a number of men in Reclaim's programs who are from Spokane Valley, and who would have chosen to stay in our community if the option had been available. The City's Outreach Team will work closely with Reclaim to direct potential candidates from Spokane Valley into the new Transitional Housing options, helping to create more opportunities and options for those that the team encounters on a daily basis.

### \$1,095,000 to Family Promise of Spokane

Family promise of Spokane (FPS) has been in contact with the City for some time regarding the need for family services in Spokane Valley. In 2023 Spokane County awarded funding to Family promise to purchase a Transitional Housing location in Spokane Valley for families. The City's ARPA award will ensure that families transitioning out of homelessness have access to the resources they need to be successful, as well as adequate staffing and administration for this program expansion. Through FPS' Spokane Valley location families will be served by school-based housing case management (in coordination with each School District's HEART McKinney-Vento liaisons), a landlord relationship coordinator who will help build relationships needed to get families into units, and direct client assistance to help families quickly overcome barriers to gaining and stabilizing housing such as assistance paying for critical documents, utilities, move-in costs, employment uniforms or equipment, etc.

### \$500,000 to Volunteers of America Eastern WA

Volunteers of America (VOA) has been planning and raising funding for construction of a new youth (13 – 17 years old) shelter/program facility, called Crosswalk 2.0. The current shelter is located in the heart of downtown Spokane, which is recognized as creating significant safety concerns for the children staying there. The new facility will be located near Spokane Community College and maintain 18 emergency shelter beds and add 18 additional "college dorm" beds for youth aged 16-20 who are enrolled in an educational program and/or employed to assist them in obtaining certificates/degrees and livable wage jobs. The new location will also be much closer to Spokane Valley, making its services more accessible for our City's youth. This project will be completed with significant financial support from Spokane County and City of Spokane as well, as it is a regional resource that aims to address a regional need.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### [\\$471,729 to Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners](#)

Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP) was awarded a portion of their request for gap funding to complete the 60-unit Broadway Senior Housing project. The \$24 million dollar project is being constructed on land already owned by SNAP, and will serve seniors at or below 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI), and charge no more than 30% of each tenant's income to ensure long-term affordability. All units will be accessible, allowing residents to age in place even with mobility changes. There will be a variety of community areas and amenities including a community room with a kitchen, on-site management, a Service Coordinator, small gathering spaces, walking paths, garden beds, laundry on each floor, free 24-hour monitored call system, and wi-fi throughout.

### [\\$471,728 to Habitat for Humanity Spokane](#)

Habitat for Humanity was awarded a portion of their request to fund land acquisition for the future development of entry-level home ownership options , specifically for households earning between 45%-65% of AMI. Habitat provides permanently affordable homeownership services in partnership to individuals and families that would not otherwise be able to qualify for a conventional mortgage. The program will serve those meeting income requirements, are experiencing housing instability due to inadequate/unsafe living conditions/overcrowding/homelessness, and agree to partner by contributing 250 hours of sweat equity, saving for closing costs, and completing partnership requirements.

These awards reflect the priorities put forward by the City Council and will bring needed services and options to Spokane Valley for populations experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, as well as supporting the addition of much-needed affordable units for seniors and home ownership opportunities for low-income families.

Two million dollars in ARPA funds have yet to be distributed. These last ARPA funds have been ear-marked to support the development of housing in Spokane Valley targeted at those who earn 80% or less than the Area Median Income (AMI). Exact priorities have yet to be articulated by the Council, and the RFP process for these funds has not yet begun. But through partnerships and collaboration with a variety of nonprofit and for-profit housing developers the City is confident that when it allocates these funds they will go towards adding additional units of housing needed in our community.

## Spokane Valley Homeless Action Plan (SVHAP)

### **Establishment of Housing Homeless Program .**

On July 25, 2023, Council adopted a resolution to assume control over available document recording fees and establish a Spokane Valley homeless housing program. To be able to start implementing this program in January 2024. Council also passed a resolution on September 12, 2023 establishing an interim task force and appointed the members. On October 24, 2023, Council passed a motion adopting the Region's Five-Year Plan for 2024 and earmarking \$150,000 to fund the homeless outreach team for six months and fund shelter beds for women and men. The interim task force will develop a Five-Year Plan for 2025-2029 and propose potential funding recommendations for 2024.

1. Investigate a property acquisition for possible services in Spokane Valley.
2. Connect with and recruit service providers to serve Spokane Valley residents.
3. Work with regional bodies to promote solutions and serve Spokane Valley's unhoused population.
4. In collaboration with partners, assist 10 individuals experiencing homelessness in Spokane Valley in obtaining permanent housing.
5. Continue developing and implementing a responsive, efficient process for removing trash, vehicles, encampments as necessary. Work with contracted crews, SCOPE volunteers, and outreach team to address issues on public lands, work with government agency partners to address issues on their properties, and code enforcement to address issues on private property.
6. Collaborate with and support regional housing providers in creating 50 new affordable housing units.
7. Implement one to two recommendations from the Housing Action Plan.
8. Create inventory tracking for the number of permanent affordable units in Spokane Valley, number of new units (affordable and market rate), and number of existing units converted to permanent affordable units.