

# Homelessness Response



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King County attempts to balance the need for long-term solutions and short-term/interim actions to address the homeless crisis in Seattle-King County. Multiple public/private and community groups are working as partners to address the realities facing individuals experiencing variations of homelessness, present in urban, suburban, and rural areas of the County. King County has taken unique yet pragmatic approaches to addressing unmet needs for all those who struggle to come inside or live in substandard conditions, including cars or RVs parked on city streets. To date, \$97 Million of CLFR funding has been allocated towards homelessness interventions through programs including hotel/motel leases, COVID-19 deintensification, permanent supportive housing, behavioral health services, homeless outreach and shelter procurement, enhanced shelter, and sanitation. King County endorses plans that emphasize consolidation of regional response under one authority, instituting a community definition of change, and becoming accountable to customers.

## Investment Areas

- King County pioneered COVID-19 Deintensification Sites to deliberately reduce shelter density for purposes of physical distancing and infection prevention for people experiencing homelessness.
- Health Through Housing recognizes that the ability to sleep in a bed, to use a bathroom, to feel safe, and to have the dignity of a place to live are foundations of health. A goal of up to 1,600 emergency housing and permanent supportive housing units for people experiencing chronic homelessness will be created with onsite behavioral health and 24/7 wrap around services.
- In December 2022, King County announced its first residents moving into Salmonberry Lofts, a new 80-unit Health Through Housing building in Seattle's Pioneer Square.
- Temporary housing support helps address immediate needs of participants with the ultimate goal to help move the unhoused into stable, permanent housing as quickly as possible, by providing supportive services. The County's street outreach combined with hotel-based lodging programs help to reduce community transmission of COVID-19.
- Other County homelessness strategies utilize community partners to provide services including stimulus check and benefits access assistance, encampment sanitation assistance, and RV community support.

## COVID-19 Deintensification Sites

In February 2020, King County experienced the first U.S. outbreak of COVID-19. King County pioneered COVID-19 deintensification as a novel response, in which many individuals experiencing homelessness were moved out of high-density congregate emergency shelters into hotel rooms. Others stayed in congregate settings but, because of the hotels and acquiring additional congregate spaces, people could spread out to comply with public health recommendations to maintain a certain distance between beds. Public health officials identified the elderly, those with underlying health conditions, and individuals without the means or facilities to follow guidance on hygiene, social distancing, and self-isolation or quarantine had the highest risk of infection and death from the virus. As such, individuals experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity and those utilizing high-density congregate shelter services were seen as particularly susceptible to outbreaks of COVID-19. In 2020, the King County Department of Community and Health Services (DCHS) observed high rates of viral spread in congregate facilities sheltering; in some cases, 30-40% of all residents in that building contracted COVID-19 almost immediately. Non-congregate sheltering for vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness was recognized as a necessary intervention to prevent widespread COVID-19 outbreaks, save lives, and protect health and safety.



**Figure 1: COVID-19 Deintensification Site facilities were developed across King County.** This map shows all locations (both active and decommissioned). For example, the Inn at Queen Anne facility has transitioned to Health Through Housing permanent support housing. In July 2022, Renton and Elliot Ave were the only active locations. Note that King County adjusts facility bed counts in response to pandemic demand; Maximum bed counts at each facility are listed.

Shelter deintensification took what were formerly congregate shelters for people experiencing homelessness, with individuals sleeping in very close proximity, and moved them to hotels. To reduce shelter densities (creating physical distancing) and provide private restrooms and showers, either entire shelters or some units of shelters were moved to hotels. Seven Deintensification Site locations were initially developed. As COVID-19 case numbers dropped, many sites phased out in 2022 and/or transitioned to Health Through Housing locations.

Where entire shelters were moved, King County DCHS leased hotels and contracted with non-profit providers. Skilled and reliable subrecipients managed each site and provided services to residents, including Catholic Community Services and Downtown Emergency Services Center. The overall goals for equity in homelessness response programs apply to this program, tracking participant stability of housing in shelter and moving on to permanent housing.

A qualitative and quantitative [analysis](#) of King County's unprecedented deintensification efforts was published in 2022,<sup>1</sup> coauthored by King County Performance Measurement and Evaluation Unit's staff and a University of Washington research team, described the experiences of and outcomes on individuals who were moved from shelters to non-congregate hotel settings. Their findings confirmed that moving individuals from congregate shelter settings to group hotels successfully limited the spread of COVID-19 *and* improved their health and well-being. Participants and staff voiced enthusiasm for personal changes in themselves and others: reduced stress, reduced interpersonal conflict, better sleep and nutrition, self-care, enhanced privacy, security and safety for themselves and their belongings, better engagement with staff and services, and best of all, a return of organizational skill, executive clarity, and a future-focus. Participants stabilized and regrouped.

While emergency shelter is intended to provide a short-term, immediate, and safe alternative to sleeping on the streets, a modest increase in shelter stay duration is preferable if it leads to better housing outcomes. Those sheltered in hotels were less inclined to leave and thus had time to work with staff to find better housing options. In the context of the pandemic, this type of stability also reduced disease spread – the primary goal of shelter de-intensification.

## Health Through Housing

Housing is a foundation for health. As demonstrated by King County's COVID-19 deintensification actions, the basics of health include the ability to sleep in a bed, to use a bathroom, to feel safe, and to have the dignity of one's own space. Congregate shelters are not a long-term solution; single room housing is healthier, can provide immediate emergency shelter AND can be restructured in the future for more permanent lodging. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) paired with subsidized housing and wrap-around case management and supportive services is a proven solution to chronic homelessness—helping people experiencing chronic homelessness to not only achieve long-term housing stability, but also improve their health and well-being.

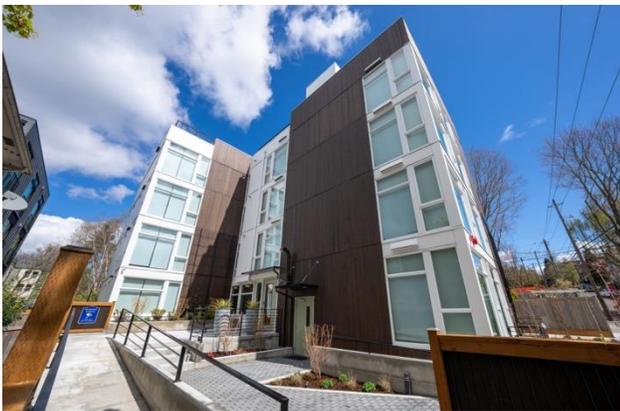
The Health Through Housing (HTH) initiative is a regional approach to addressing chronic homelessness on a countywide scale. King County is partnering with local jurisdictions with the goal of creating up to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2022.2075027>

1,600 emergency housing and permanent supportive housing units for people experiencing or at risk of experiencing chronic homelessness. Onsite 24/7 staffing will include case management, employment counseling, and access to health and behavioral health services. By acquiring existing facilities, such as former hotels, HTH immediately creates housing units that are dignified, protective, and service enriched. King County is committed to working with local cities and communities to identify suitable properties, and then participate in planning and community engagement together. At the least, success will be measured by the number of individuals moved from homelessness into stable housing and the percentage of those households who remain stably housed over time.

Primarily using the recently granted 0.1% state sales tax, King County began purchasing hotels to bring permanent supportive housing at the scale our community needs. The Health Through Housing Initiative’s facilities include housing units acquired from former hotels, nursing homes, and other similar properties. In the hot real estate market that currently exists in King County, the ability to acquire reasonable properties might seem difficult, but as the hospitality industry still has not rebounded from COVID-19’s impact, hotels are for sale at lower-than-normal prices. Thanks to HTH, King County has been able to take advantage of this unusual situation to acquire properties both for permanent supportive and emergency housing for less money than normally possible.



**Figure 2: Recently opened HTH location in Seattle’s Capitol Hill.** [\*Outside and ground floor view from inside\*](#) the newest HTH property — providing 35 units of permanent supportive housing (& 2 units of office space) to queer, transgender, two-spirit, Black, Indigenous, people of color (QT2BIPOC) residents. The purchase of this building used blended funding from King County and the City of Seattle.

King County has purchased or made agreements to purchase eleven properties in the HTH initiative: Auburn (102 units), Federal Way (101 units), Kirkland (121 units), North Seattle – Aurora (100 units), North Seattle – Stone (131 units), Redmond (144 units), Renton (110 units), Seattle – Argyle (10 units), Seattle – Capitol Hill (37 units), Seattle – Pioneer Square (80 units), and Seattle – Queen Anne (80 units). HTH properties cover a wide geographic area, including three in South King County, two on the Eastside, and six in Seattle. HTH also partnered with the City of Seattle to permanently add four City-owned buildings to the portfolio, adding 350 apartment units where King County will fund all services and ongoing operations: North Seattle (88 units), Seattle – 12th Ave (100 units), Seattle – District 4 (62 units), and Seattle – The North Star (100 units). Overall, over 1300 beds have been secured for residents experiencing chronic homelessness. The County continues to work with local jurisdictions on future acquisitions to meet the initiative’s goals of 1600 dignified, protective, and service enriched units. These properties will provide housing stability and wraparound services for health and wellbeing to help our most vulnerable residents.

Outreach teams are out on the streets, working with local providers and cities to coordinate, locate, and identify chronically homeless people living in the sub-regions. Persons referred to HTH will also have been screened and assessed to aid in their housing placement, having often undergone some amount of situational stabilization. This often contrasts, studies show, to persons entering shelter that may be coming directly from an institution like a hospital; they will not always have been screened prior to seeking shelter.

*"We are building a culture here. This place is for community members who need it and is a positive place. Health Through Housing is a great example of what this city and county is all about."*  
— HTH Program Manager

## King County's HTH Model

King County's HTH model is based on the following foundational premises:

- Incorporate the lessons of COVID deintensification shelters, which demonstrated that single room settings are more supportive of a person's stability, health, and ability to maintain housing.<sup>2</sup>
- Exercise the authority provided by the Washington Legislature to create a funding source to amass sufficient capital in order to rapidly acquire and operate for the long term up to 1,600 new supportive housing units.<sup>3</sup>
- Take advantage of the counter-cyclical housing investment opportunity in a temporary economic circumstance to buy relatively new or recently updated hotels or apartments, many of which include kitchen facilities, to substantially grow the region's stock of affordable homes in months rather than years.
- Establish partnerships with cities across King County to site and operate emergency and permanent supportive housing at a speed and scale not previously possible. This coordinated strategy recognizes that — in order to reduce chronic homelessness in King County — communities, cities, and the County must act boldly together to increase housing that is available to and supportive of residents who have been living outside.

## Behavioral Health Intervention Services in Health Through Housing Facilities

Behavioral health intervention services are a key component of each HTH facility with goals of crisis intervention, de-escalation, and engagement in behavioral health care. Mobile, behavioral health intervention services are offered in HTH Facilities and selected PSH Sites across King County through a \$2.8M current CLFR funding allocation. Interventions encompass screening/intake, behavioral health assessment/evaluation, case management, peer support, crisis intervention, counseling services, psychiatric medication evaluation and prescribing, access to Buprenorphine and Naltrexone and short-term maintenance, overdose prevention, and assistance with linkage to additional behavioral health treatment and recovery supports. Care is comprehensive, provided by a team of medical staff, mental health and substance use disorder clinicians, case managers and certified peer specialists.

Behavioral Health Mobile Outreach with support from the Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) brings case management, mental health, and behavioral health substance abuse disorder (SUD) services

<sup>2</sup> [https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study\\_Full-Report\\_Final-11302020.pdf](https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study_Full-Report_Final-11302020.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> <http://lawfilesexxt.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1070-S.SL.pdf?q=20210815073813>

directly to individuals. Implementing this low-barrier model, offers a person-centered, accessible approach to delivering services, ensuring tailored assistance in meeting a person's individual needs and goals, and offering autonomy and choice in engaging with clinical care.

DESC outreach and engagement help businesses and residents become aware of the services that are available. Additionally, King County has engaged the community during their acquisition of HTH hotels. RFPs were available to the entire King County Behavioral Health Network. Any feedback received from constituents, community-based organizations, and the communities themselves is reviewed with the service provider and adjusted as needed, as this is part of the contract monitoring process.

### Salmonberry Lofts (Seattle - Pioneer Square Health Through Housing Location)

In November 2021, King County took occupancy of a brand-new apartment facility in Seattle's Pioneer Square to provide Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for individuals who are chronically homeless within the city. This HTH building is Salmonberry Lofts, formerly named Canton Lofts. This PSH project included the purchase of the downtown property and offers case management, wrap-around services, meals, and dignified housing to individuals who are chronically homeless as a response to COVID-19.

Eligibility for residency include those whose income is  $\leq 30\%$  of the area median and who are experiencing or at-risk of chronic homelessness defined as either: 1. An adult person with a disability who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, or 2. An adult person with a disability who has experienced multiple episodes of homelessness in the past three years for a combined 12 months. Chief Seattle Club serves as the contracted Operator and Service Provider, with a focus on serving the American Indian/Alaskan Natives communities experiencing or at risk of chronic homelessness.

The building purchase used blended funding including CLFR ARPA funds, producing 76 units of PSH and 4 units of office space. Services available will include 24/7 onsite staffing and controlled access, access to physical and behavioral health services, and permanent housing counseling. Property operators and service providers are committed to being responsive to local jurisdiction and community concerns.

King County has held multiple community engagement meetings with potential Operators and service providers, local jurisdictions, and the public. King County requires a good neighborhood agreement



between the County and the local jurisdiction prior to moving forward with operating the property to ensure all parties are onboard with the project and to capture diverse feedback from constituents, community-based organizations, and the communities themselves. To ensure that businesses had equitable access to compete or apply for CLFR funding through this program, King County posted a Letter of Interest for agencies interested in applying as the Operator and Service provider.

King County Executive Dow Constantine and Chief Seattle Club announced the opening of Salmonberry Lofts in partnership with the City of Seattle. The first residents to the 80-unit building moved in as of December 2022.

## King County announces first residents moving into new 80-unit Health Through Housing building in Pioneer Square.

### CASE STUDY

#### Permanent Supportive Housing: Salmonberry Lofts

[In December 2022](#), King County Executive Dow Constantine announced a new opening for Health Through Housing (HTH): Salmonberry Lofts, a newly constructed building providing 76 units of permanent supportive housing and 4 units of office space.<sup>4</sup> The building welcomed its first residents in late December 2022 and is being operated by [Chief Seattle Club](#), an organization with a local footprint in the Pioneer Square neighborhood. New residents continued to move in through February 2023. The first floor of the building includes community meeting space and activity rooms. The Salmonberry Lofts in Seattle's Pioneer Square are located at 204 3rd Ave South.



**“We know the transformative power of having a safe, dignified place to live, and opening the doors of Salmonberry Lofts moves us closer to our goal that every person will have a home and the opportunity to move forward in their lives,”** said Executive Constantine. “None of this would be possible without the partnership of the City of Seattle and community-based providers like Chief Seattle

<sup>4</sup> <https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/news/release/2022/December/14-HTH-Salmonberry-Lofts.aspx>

Club. Salmonberry Lofts joins our other buildings around the county - including two opening soon in Auburn and Federal Way - in providing stable housing, forging connections to services, and restoring hope.”

[Purchased in July 2021](#), Salmonberry Lofts, formerly named [Canton Lofts](#), is the fifth Health Through Housing building to open – and the fourth in Seattle – continuing progress toward the initiative’s target to open 1,600 units of affordable housing for people experiencing, or at risk of chronic homelessness in King County.<sup>5</sup> By acquiring existing facilities, such as former hotels, nursing homes, and other similar



properties, Health Through Housing creates housing that is dignified, protective, and service enriched. The initiative also aims to reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality among people experiencing chronic homelessness. Black, Native American, and Alaska Native members of the community are five times overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness. Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander members of the community are three times overrepresented.

Salmonberry was designed in partnership with Chief Seattle Club to be culturally appropriate, and will center traditional wellness in its programming, in addition to wraparound services such as behavioral health supports and employment navigation. It is just around the corner from Chief Seattle Club’s urban housing complex ʔálʔal. This is the first Health Through Housing partnership with the organization as building operators.

“By investing in supportive housing, King County and Seattle are confronting systems that disenfranchise and marginalize and are also creating opportunities for a more inclusive and safe community for everyone,” said Executive Constantine. These partnerships embody the core principles of Health Through Housing: “providing more supportive housing **to help people stabilize and recover** while addressing the racial disproportionality of people who are failed by current systems.”

As with all Health Through Housing locations, **Salmonberry Lofts has 24/7 building staffing, including case managers, housing navigators, connection to health and behavioral services, and assistance in entitlement and employment programs.**

“Every community deserves access to quality, culturally-competent care and support – this acquisition allows for pairing those critical services with needed housing,” said Mayor Harrell. “To reduce homelessness and to support recovery, health, and the best outcomes for communities disproportionately likely to experience chronic homelessness, our focus must be intentional toward understanding and meeting their specific needs.”



<sup>5</sup> <https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/news/release/2021/July/29-health-through-housing.aspx>

Health Through Housing is focused on cultivating a network of wraparound supports designed to meet the specific needs of HTH residents and local communities. King County is committed to getting there in a way that centers good stewardship of relationships and resources, and accountability to our True North: Making King County a welcoming community where every person can thrive.

Here's how HTH will achieve this goal:



“A program that wants to make **the impact of the Health Through Housing initiative has to depend on partnerships** – partnerships between government, partnerships between the County and the City, partnership amongst providers, and most importantly, the partnership that’s necessary between a case manager and the person that they’re supporting,” said [Leo Flor](#), Director of King County’s Department of Community and Human Services, the lead agency implementing HTH. “To all our partners in this work, thank you!”<sup>6</sup>

To help track continued efforts, process, outcomes, and community-wide impact, King County’s Health Through Housing initiative released its inaugural [data dashboard](#) which provides information on the

<sup>6</sup> Inaugural Health Through Housing Dashboard Message from Leo Flor, DCHS Director:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTY4lAs-lBo>.

HTH model and progress made during the initiative's 2022 launch year.<sup>7</sup> Since purchasing HTH's first building in May 2021, the initiative has grown to 1,366 units, and 803 people have lived in or are living in HTH facilities across eight buildings throughout the region. Agreements in five cities will usher in additional supportive housing for adults in Auburn, Federal Way, Kirkland, Redmond, and Renton.<sup>8</sup> In fact, King County Executive Dow Constantine and City of Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell announced the operators for the newest Health Through Housing building [in April 2023](#) — a 37-unit building (35 housing units and 2 units of office spaces) providing permanent supportive housing in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood.<sup>9</sup>

"This is my home. Being here gave me back the ability to feel safe. It gave me back the self-esteem that I lost for a long time. After being homeless for over 20 years off and on, I can finally shut my door. I can use my bathroom and take a shower without asking for permission. I have a laundry room and have clean clothes. I'm finally able to go to all my doctor appointments. I even started a garden to grow vegetables and flowers for everyone. Living here is peaceful."

*Sarah\*, Health Through Housing resident*

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<sup>7</sup> Browse through the HTH dashboard at <https://kingcounty.gov/hthdashboard>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://dchsblog.com/2023/06/15/health-through-housings-inaugural-data-dashboard-is-live/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/news/release/2023/April/24-HTH-capitol-hill-operators.aspx>

For more information on HTH, see <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/initiatives/health-through-housing.aspx>.

## Street Outreach Combined with Temporary Hotel-Based Lodging

Street outreach combined with temporary hotel-based lodging is one component of King County's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce COVID-19's impact on homeless populations by providing temporary housing and wraparound support to adults living unsheltered. By providing non-congregate temporary housing options, these services will have the effect of preventing and/or reducing community transmission of COVID-19. These services may also work to reduce the impact of tent encampment sweeps and other law enforcement responses to homelessness which carry their own public health risks—COVID-19 and otherwise—by diverting individuals for support services when criminal actions are a result of unmet behavioral health needs.

Street Outreach, Targeted Homeless Outreach and Shelter Program Procurement, JustCARE Extension, and Co-LEAD Extension are ARPA funded programs conducting this outreach to provide homeless individuals with the appropriate shelter and/or services as well as connect to surrounding businesses to alert them of services and discuss how to access the services. Hoteling and case management services are provided to people experiencing homelessness. Direct services are intended for priority populations and historically marginalized adults with unmet behavioral health needs. Non-profit providers which specialize in working with these communities will be partnered, including the Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS).

## Short-Term/Interim Housing Support

Besides the programs described above, CLFR has funded enhanced shelters, a tiny house village, and a temporary family shelter contract. Such novel temporary housing support helps address immediate needs of unique participants, although as with all such projects, the ultimate goal is to help move the unhoused into stable, permanent housing as quickly as possible.

The Enhanced Shelter Program provides shelters with supportive services in response to COVID-19. The program seeks to: 1. Increase shelter availability for households experiencing homelessness; 2. Provide shelter settings designed to meet CDC and Public Health COVID guidelines with appropriate distancing and health and hygiene supports with an emphasis on non-congregate shelter; 3. Support homeless households in meeting their basic needs including food, shelter and access to other basic resources; 4. Provide PPE and sanitation supplies and access to COVID vaccinations and testing; and 5. Support participants in planning for and accessing increased housing stability, permanent housing screening and assessment eligibility for local state and federal relief programs and stimulus.

Several partnerships are involved—including Plymouth Housing Group, Salvation Army, Catholic Community Services, and King County Regional Homelessness Authority—which work with slightly different specialties and priority groups. As such, many of the shelters are specialized to serve sub-populations of people experiencing homelessness. For example, the enhanced shelter model responds to the concerns of people living in shelters with pets and provides elements of responsive services, 24/7 access, and low barriers to entry. Shelters are reconfigured to manage COVID prevention and distancing between cots. Community engagement is part of the development project for several of the shelters. King County Department of Community of Human Services (DCHS) is partnering with the Facilities Management Division (FMD) on site development for shelters and FMD is managing construction contracts and related labor issues.

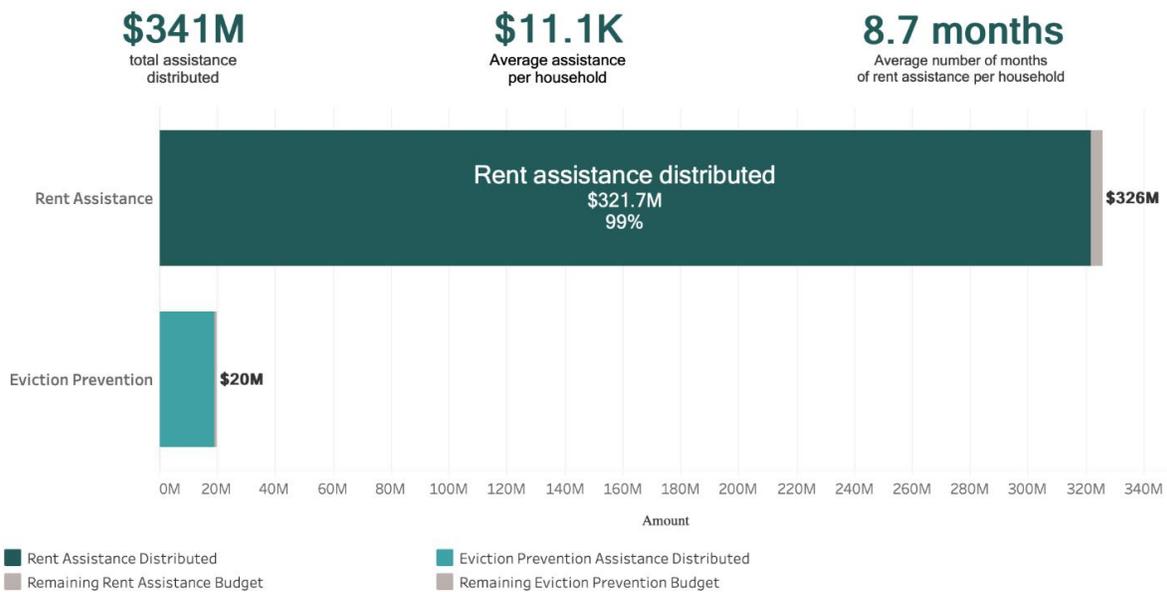
CLFR funding was also used to establish a tiny house village. The purpose of the program is to offer a year-round, temporary alternative to sleeping in vehicles or living outdoors while offering services that will help address immediate needs of participants with the ultimate goal to help move the unhoused into stable, permanent housing as quickly as possible. The Low Income Housing Institute will partner with King County to provide housing and services to households experiencing homelessness through two tiny house villages.

In addition, a temporary family shelter that provides shelter and related services to women, children, and families was opened in January 2022 in downtown Bellevue. The Family Emergency Shelter program, in partnership with Mary’s Place, provides temporary shelter and related services to women, children, and families to support their path out of homelessness.

### Eviction Prevention and Rent Assistance Program

The King County Eviction Prevention and Rent Assistance Program (EPRAP) helps residents behind in rent and utility payments due to COVID-19 hardships. Although separately funded through other federal funding sources (including ARPA and CRRSA), it is a major pillar of the County’s COVID-19 response. This program compliments King County’s CLFR funded program efforts. This program funded at the federal level primarily by ARPA and CRRSA provides payment support for back rent and future rent obligations to households strapped due to unemployment, lost wages, and health crises as a result of the pandemic. In receiving rent payments from King County, the landlord must sign a Payment Agreement stating the payment period and the terms and conditions to which the landlord agrees (i.e., not increase rent for six months after payment period and to not issue late fees or additional charges).

#### EPRAP assistance distributed since July 2021



**Figure 3: Most of the EPRAP funding has been distributed to struggling King County households since July 2021.** EPRAP has utilized 99% of its \$326M Rent Assistance Budget and 97% of its \$20M Eviction Prevention Budget. Still, \$341M in total assistance has been distributed to more than 29,900 households. Funding prevents households from losing their housing. Figure taken from the EPRAP Data Dashboard. Data as of 6/12/2023 includes all tenants in the EPRAP data system since July 2021.

[The EPRAP Data Dashboard](#)<sup>10</sup> reports that since July 2021, \$341M of rent assistance has been distributed to 29,982 households, while 51,748 households are either in the pipeline or denied and 51,763 households have identified interest in the program. An average of \$11.1K in assistance per household has been distributed for an average of 8.7 months of rent assistance per household. 74% of households that received rent assistance identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (County average = 39%) and 20% of households that received rent assistance identify as Hispanic or Latina/o/x (County average = 9%). Renters are more likely than homeowners to be cost burdened and people of color are more likely to be severely cost burdened.<sup>11</sup>

Specifically, a total of \$19.2M has been distributed towards eviction prevention. Between July 2021 and June 2023, EPRAP has funded a per household average of \$15K (in rent, court, and legal fees) over 9.1 months to provide assistance to households who have been served with eviction notices for nonpayment of rent. The goal is to work with landlords and property owners on a resolution of the debt to keep the household safely housed. EPRAP is instrumental in preventing homelessness in the region.

In May 2023, King County Executive Dow Constantine announced the end of the historic three-year Eviction Prevention and Rent Assistance Program that reached more than 40,000 people and distributed \$390 million around the region. King County will transition by July to the new Keep King County Housed rent assistance program, funded by the state.<sup>12</sup>

## Other Homelessness Response Investments

King County has multiple goals for improving life for those experiencing homelessness and for all residents' concerns about the current homelessness crisis. King County seeks to connect homeless households to basic resources, increase housing stability, provide education and cross-training to providers, and positively impact and strengthen care to disproportionately impacted populations. Other ARPA funded King County homelessness strategies include but are not limited to encampment sanitation assistance, RV community support, and stimulus check and benefits access assistance.

Encampment sanitation assistance to people living in encampments and outreach teams to support the community health and hygiene efforts is provided through the Homeless Response Fund - Sanitation Program. Key to this is the implementation of mobile shower and hygiene stations, distribution of hygiene kits and sanitation supplies, and some garbage disposal. Connections to needed services including case management, healthcare, behavioral health, and housing support are also offered.

Similarly, the RV Community Program aims to mitigate the COVID-19 health risk to people living in RVs by providing them with the structures and tools needed to implement the CDC's public health guidance on social distancing, hygiene, and isolation. Specifically, the program provides gray and black water hook up, bathroom, shower, electricity, garbage, and support services for up to 50 RVs during the program's 24-month timeline of operations. In addition, County staff provides onsite support to assist program beneficiaries in meeting their basic needs, such as procuring identification, enrolling in insurance,

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<sup>10</sup> <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/COVID/eviction-prevention-rent-assistance/program-data.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/housing/affordable-housing-committee/data.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> <https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/news/release/2023/May/01-EPRAP-transition-and-funding.aspx>

obtaining healthcare, procuring proper clothing, and arranging childcare. A mechanic also provides help with RV rig mobility! Lastly, County staff helps beneficiaries plan their exit from homelessness by providing permanent housing screening and assessments and eligibility determinations for local state and federal relief programs and stimulus. Any procurement will ensure equitable access as a focus of the homelessness response as led by King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA).

Finally, King County is partnering with Mary's Place, Friends of Youth, and Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness to support people experiencing homelessness in King County with accessing federal and state benefits. The Stimulus Check & Benefits Access Assistance program enrolls individuals for eligible benefits such as earned income credit, child tax credits, social security, disability, and state welfare programs. In addition, the program trains providers on how to complete claim forms, access online portals, and provide staff training, outreach, and education. People experiencing homelessness in King County face multiple barriers to accessing these federal COVID-19 benefits. Common barriers include lacking access to technology needed to file taxes and apply for benefits, challenges acquiring and maintaining needed documentation (photo I.D., social security card, income verification) and lack of awareness of benefit eligibility.

## PERFORMANCE REPORT

### Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is an evidence-based solution to chronic homelessness that pairs affordable housing with case management and supportive services. Through PSH, people experiencing chronic homelessness can achieve long-term housing stability and improve their health and well-being. Permanent Supportive Housing is a housing type that pairs subsidized housing with case management and supportive services. It offers wrap around services to foster housing stability, which may include case management, counseling, behavioral health supports, medical services, and meals. PSH typically features wrap around services like employment navigation, transportation access, behavioral health supports, connection to physical health care, and structured on-site group activities. The types of services an individual receives will vary based on their needs and self-identified goals.

CLFR funding was directly utilized to purchase Salmonberry Lofts, a Health Through Housing (HTH) building. Whereas CLFR was used to acquire the property, the service delivery aspects that are evidence-based are primarily paid for by other funding streams. In essence, Health Through Housing uses blended funding. HTH is funded through a dedicated sales tax that was implemented countywide in 2020. The State Legislature passed House Bill 1590 in 2020, which allowed jurisdictions to enact a 0.1% sales tax to finance construction of affordable housing and behavioral health facilities and operations or services at affordable housing sites. In 2020, the King County Executive proposed, and the County Council adopted this dedicated sales tax. In 2021, the State Legislature passed House Bill 1070, which subsequently clarified acquisition of property as an eligible use of these funds.

Health Through Housing transforms what began as an emergency response at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic into a permanent and impactful part of King County's housing landscape by providing PSH units throughout the region. HTH arose as a concept and initiative in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic posed a once-in-a-generation challenge to the King County region and the world. COVID-19 amplified pre-existing crises of homelessness, housing affordability, and racial inequity. A consistent increase in unsheltered homelessness intersected with a reduction in overall shelter capacity.<sup>13, 14, 15</sup>

The confluence of crises required King County to move with unprecedented speed, made possible new actions and partnerships, and created new opportunities to make long-term progress. An urgent and early pandemic response to move hundreds of County residents from the most crowded congregate shelters into single-room settings in leased hotels not only significantly slowed the spread of COVID-19, but also offered residents remarkable wellness benefits that had been out of reach in congregate settings.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/king-county-accepting-applications-for-rental-assistance-before-eviction-moratorium-expires/281-0f3962e9-3abe-451d-8563-ebb4200e97d5>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.zillow.com/king-county-wa/home-values/>.

<sup>15</sup> King County Homelessness Response System Data Review: Q1 2021 Release. <https://www.zillow.com/home-values/207/king-county-wa/>.

<sup>16</sup> [https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study\\_Full-Report\\_Final-11302020.pdf](https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study_Full-Report_Final-11302020.pdf).

During this time, King County developed the HTH initiative, an innovative strategy that would accelerate the region's response to chronic homelessness by establishing up to 1,600 new PSH units in the face of compounding emergencies. King County's Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) is the lead agency implementing HTH.

## How much?

### *Salmonberry Lofts*

In December 2022, Salmonberry Lofts, a newly constructed HTH building providing 76 PSH units in Seattle's Pioneer Square neighborhood, welcomed its first residents. Designed in partnership with Chief Seattle Club, the building's contracted Operator and Service Provider, Salmonberry centers traditional wellness in its programming, with a focus on serving American Indian/Alaska Native communities experiencing or at risk of chronic homelessness. Eligibility for residency include those whose income is

*"Native Americans and Alaska Natives make up just one percent of the population but are the highest percentage of Seattle's chronically homeless. **Our work isn't done until every one of our relatives has a place to call home.** Homelessness was met with urgency during the COVID pandemic, which was so important. But **it's critical that all levels of government act with this urgency always.** We need more **creative partnerships** to ensure that developments like Salmonberry Lofts are built to meet the growing and immediate need for housing."*

*—Derrick Belgarde, Executive Director of Chief Seattle Club*

less than or equal to 30% of the area median and who are experiencing or at-risk of chronic homelessness defined as either: 1. An adult person with a disability who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, or 2. An adult person with a disability who has experienced multiple episodes of homelessness in the past three years for a combined 12 months.

Purchased in July 2021, Salmonberry Lofts, formerly named Canton Lofts, is the fifth HTH building to open, continuing progress toward the initiative's target to open 1,600 units of affordable housing for people experiencing, or at risk of chronic homelessness in King County. The building purchase used blended funding including CLFR ARPA funds, producing 76 units of PSH and four units of office space. As with all HTH locations, Salmonberry Lofts will have 24/7 onsite staffing, including case managers, housing navigators, connection to health and behavioral services, and assistance in entitlement and employment programs.

### *HTH Highlights*

HTH created new supportive housing units in more cities faster than any previous King County effort. Acquiring buildings at lower costs is a strength of the initiative, resulting in the purchase of 11 buildings across six cities within two and a half years. By repurposing existing buildings such as former hotels, nursing homes,

*"With the acquisition of the first property in May 2021, Health Through Housing took a significant step forward in the struggle to solve chronic homelessness. We appreciate the shared commitment by cities, providers, neighbors, and the community to partner with us and welcome these new housing opportunities for people experiencing chronic homelessness. By taking unified action across the County, we can turn the tide on this regional crisis."*

*—Dow Constantine, King County Executive*

and other similar properties, HTH opens its buildings within 11 months of acquisition - significantly faster than newly constructed affordable housing.<sup>17</sup>

By the end of 2022, HTH provided supportive housing for more than 800 King County residents at risk of or experiencing chronic homelessness, and several hundred more eligible King County residents will soon gain supportive housing as additional HTH buildings open in 2023. Since purchasing HTH's first building in May 2021, the initiative has grown to 1,366 units. Agreements in five cities will usher in additional supportive housing for adults in Auburn, Federal Way, Kirkland, Redmond, and Renton.<sup>18</sup>

### *HTH as a Direct and Indirect Driver of Health*

HTH reflects the premise that safe, stable, and affordable housing is a fundamental component of a person's ability to gain and sustain health. By working creatively to develop new supportive housing capacity for King County's most vulnerable residents, HTH offers a dignified place for people directly impacted by chronic homelessness to rest, heal, and thrive.

HTH supports people in their health and wellbeing through on-site operators and partner service providers. By pairing apartment units with on-site health care services and programming to address the social determinants of health, the HTH model makes housing both a direct and indirect driver of health.

In 2022, the HTH initiative developed partnerships with local community-based organizations for the purpose of providing health supportive services designed especially for HTH residents. Illustrated in the following figure, these partnerships include:

- On-site medical care and health insurance enrollment in collaboration with HealthPoint and Community Health Plan of Washington;
- A 24/7 mobile behavioral health crisis response program, known as the Mobile Response Team (MRT), through DESC for crisis intervention and acute behavioral health supports, described further below; and

By the end of 2022\*, HTH accomplished the following:



**Figure 4: 2022 HTH Data.** *These figures include acquisition activity that began in 2021 and includes County-owned and City-owned buildings that have been permanently added to the HTH portfolio. HTH funds ongoing operations for all buildings in the HTH portfolio.*

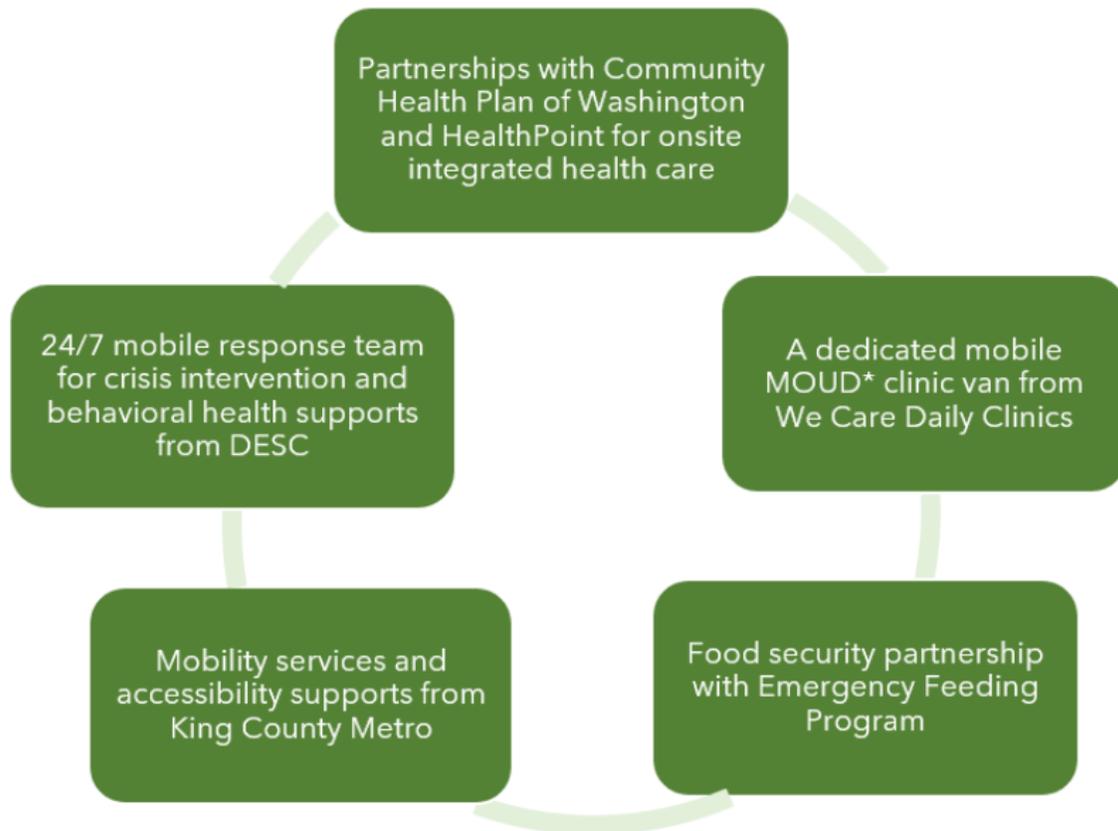
<sup>17</sup> Based on internal analysis performed by King County DCHS' Housing, Homelessness, and Community Development Division, including both PSH and EH buildings.

<sup>18</sup> For more information, see the Health Through Housing Data Dashboard: <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/initiatives/health-through-housing/dashboard.aspx>.

- On-site access to medications for opioid use disorder, low acuity physical health care, and behavioral health counseling through a dedicated partnership with We Care Daily Clinics.

In addition to physical and behavioral health care, HTH is designed to address the social determinants of health through holistic services and programming. Examples of these services include:

- Mobility and public transportation support from King County Metro;
- Provision of nutritional, culturally responsive food boxes to address food insecurity among residents; and
- Pro-social activities and programming such as computer labs and fitness classes.



*\*MOUD stands for medications for opioid use disorder.*

**Figure 5: Health Through Housing reaffirms housing as a pathway to improved health and quality of life, both directly and indirectly.** DCHS has secured a number of committed health-focused partnerships to support health supportive services at HTH sites. By pairing apartment units with services like mobile behavioral health and onsite health insurance enrollment, HTH makes housing a direct and indirect driver of health.

### *Implementation Status of Health Supportive Services*

The Mobile Response Team, accessible van services, and food security services were activated at several HTH sites by the end of 2022. The full range of health supportive services will be available at all HTH buildings by 2024. Physical and behavioral health care services that were under development during 2022 will be available in future HTH buildings.

### *Mobile Behavioral Health Service Implementation and Data Collection Update*

Consistent with the HTH Implementation Plan, using temporary federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, in March 2022 DCHS established a 24/7 mobile behavioral health crisis response program, referred to as the Mobile Response Team (MRT), and selected DESC as its operator.<sup>19</sup> By the end of the year, this program served selected supportive housing buildings funded by King County, including HTH's Bertha Pitts Campbell Place in Seattle, Mary Pilgrim Inn in Seattle, and Sidney Wilson House in Renton. Based on projected staff capacity, DESC intends to expand MRT service to HTH's Bob G. in Seattle, Don's Place in Auburn, and Salmonberry Lofts in Seattle in 2023. MRT services will be available at all HTH buildings in 2024, consistent with the HTH Implementation Plan.<sup>20</sup>

Given the anticipated 2024 timeline for full MRT implementation and the beginning of local HTH funding for the program, comprehensive program data collection will begin at that time, and will include information about people served by geographic area. While the scope of the MRT is still expanding, residents continue to have access to behavioral health services provided by Public Health – Seattle & King County's Health Care for the Homeless Network, as well as the network of community behavioral health providers administered by King County DCHS' Behavioral Health and Recovery Division (BHRD) that are available through Medicaid, state funding, and MIDD behavioral health sales tax funds.

### *Baseline Metrics for Physical Health Care and Behavioral Health Care Access*

Initial data points from the HTH initiative's first full year serve as baseline benchmarks to inform the future of HTH's work, including the initiative's efforts to help residents access the care they need. In 2022:

- 31 percent of HTH residents accessed physical health care supports through Health Care for the Homeless Network (HCHN) and Public Health Seattle-King County facilities.
- 32 percent of residents accessed behavioral healthcare supports through HCHN and King County BHRD's network of community behavioral health agencies.

A core tenet of the supportive housing model is respecting each person's right to choose whether or how to access care.<sup>21</sup> HTH residents access health care services in many different ways, not all of which can be quantified via data that is available to HTH. HTH will continue to monitor health outcomes and access and update its dashboard and other reporting to reflect additional data on care access as it becomes available.

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<sup>19</sup> The Initial Health Through Housing Implementation Plan 2022-2028 described plans for HTH funding for the mobile behavioral health team called for by the plan's supporting goal 2 to begin after temporary funds for such services via the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) are no longer available. As of the drafting of this report, the transition from ARPA funding to HTH funding for this service is anticipated December 2024. Consistent with the plan and KCC 24.30.030, the County regularly allocates a portion of HTH funds to the Behavioral Health Fund to support behavioral health services that are ineligible for Medicaid funding, and these transfers to the Behavioral Health Fund will be used to support the mobile behavioral health team, referred to in this report as the Mobile Response Team.

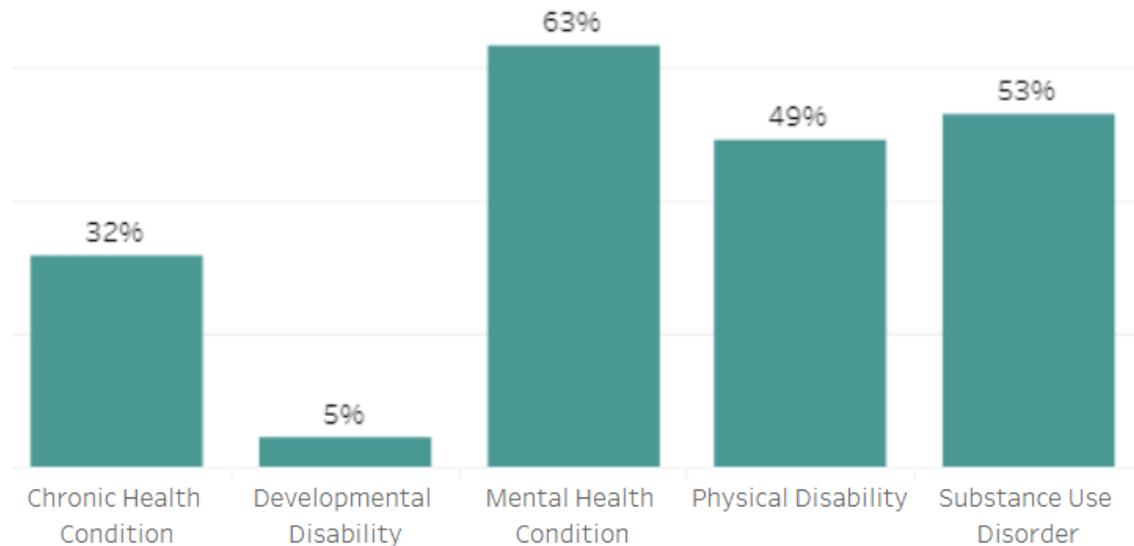
<sup>20</sup> <https://mkcclegisearch.kingcounty.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9959294&GUID=718EA25C-9032-448C-8C98-060B2C97B5E8>.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/KeyPrinciplespdf.pdf>; <https://endhomelessness.org/ending-homelessness/solutions/permanent-supportive-housing/>.

### HTH Residents' Health Challenges

Overall, people experiencing homelessness have high rates of illness and chronic mental and physical health conditions, and on average die 12 years earlier than the general U.S. population. Their lack of housing creates barriers to accessing health care and following health care directives, such as adhering to mental health and prescription medication routines.<sup>22</sup>

The figure below shows the wide array of health challenges that residents of HTH sites face. At the time they moved into an HTH building, nearly two thirds of HTH residents reported experiencing a mental health condition, and over half faced a substance use disorder (SUD). Nearly half also had a physical disability. Other HTH residents reported chronic health conditions or developmental disabilities.



**Figure 6: Percent of HTH Residents in 2022 Reporting Health Conditions at Move-In.**

### How equitably did we provide service?

Compared to their share of the general King County population, American Indian/Alaska Native/Indigenous, Black/African American/African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x) communities are all overrepresented among those experiencing chronic homelessness.<sup>23</sup> Yet few supportive housing programs in the King County region are designed or operated by Black and Native-led organizations. HTH's intentional focus on housing historically marginalized communities that are

Centering Equity in the Design and Delivery of Supportive Housing

<sup>22</sup> <https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/homelessness-and-health.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> King County HMIS Data as of 3/1/2023, US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021. For more discussion of disproportionality in chronic homelessness, including a disproportionality index that provides another way to understand the issue, see the *Understanding Disproportionality* tab of the HTH Dashboard, <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/initiatives/health-through-housing/dashboard.aspx>.

more likely to experience homelessness have led to partnerships with organizations like Chief Seattle Club, the Urban League, and Lavender Rights Project. These operator partnerships are one way the initiative helps to increase access to supportive housing that is by and for communities of color.

Many broader societal factors influence the racial-ethnic disproportionality among people experiencing chronic homelessness. These include upstream macroeconomic factors that are often drivers of homelessness, as well as how well other supportive housing programs in the region are working to advance equity in who they house.

HTH works to address racial-ethnic disproportionality by intentionally housing individuals who come from communities disproportionately impacted by chronic homelessness. In this respect, as shown in Table 1, HTH made progress in addressing disproportionality for Black/African American/African households experiencing chronic homelessness in 2022 by serving a higher proportion of Black/African American/African households than the proportion of King County residents who both experience chronic homelessness and identify as Black/African American/African. HTH resident demographics in 2022 approximated the racial/ethnic makeup of King County’s chronically homeless population as a whole. HTH did not make progress in reducing disproportionality for American Indian/Alaska Native/Indigenous, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x) households in 2022.

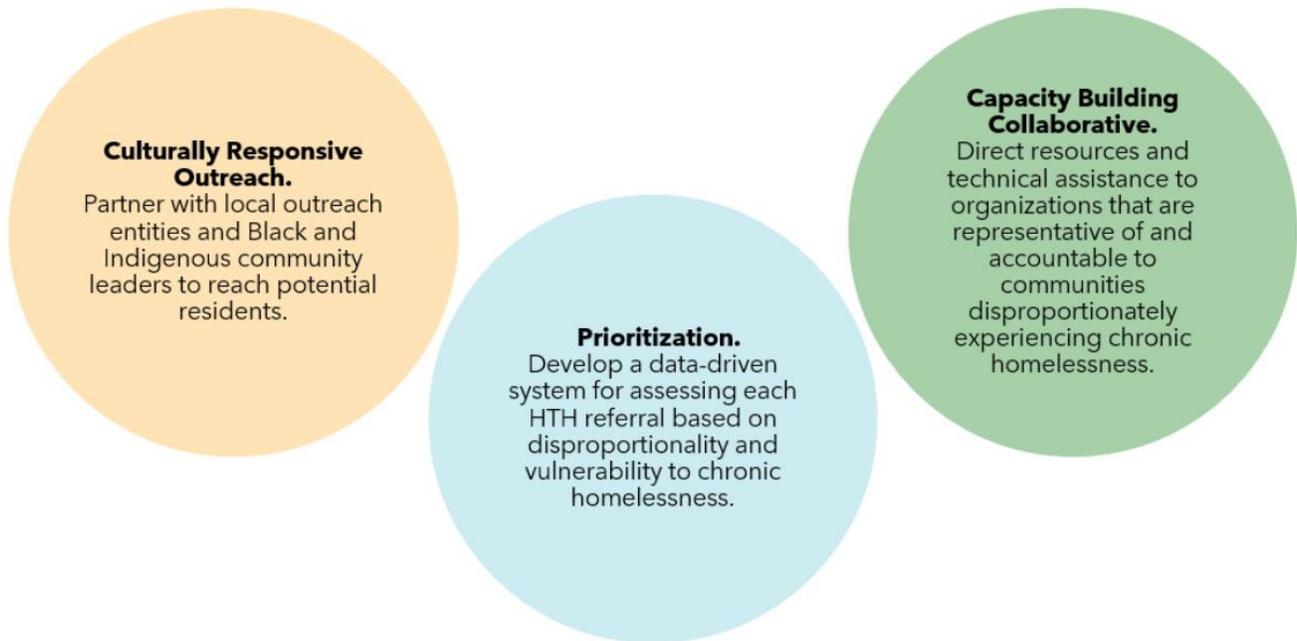
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Percent of 2022 HTH Residents</i>	<i>Percent of People in King County Experiencing Chronic Homelessness</i>	<i>Percent of King County Population</i>
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	3%	5%	1%
Asian or Asian American	3%	2%	18%
Black, African American, or African	27%	26%	6%
Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x)	9%	10%	8%
Multiracial	5%	7%	7%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2%	2%	1%
Unknown/Unreported	6%	3%	N/A
White	45%	45%	58%

**Table 1: Race/Ethnicity of HTH residents in 2022 Compared to Chronically Homeless Population and Overall Population in King County.** Sources: Seattle-King County HMIS Data as of 3/1/2023. US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021.

King County DCHS continues to investigate this trend through its ongoing evaluation of the HTH initiative. In 2022, HTH developed additional strategies to further promote racial equity and increased access to supportive housing for historically marginalized communities. These strategies include:

- Conducting culturally responsive homeless outreach;
- Directing resources and technical assistance to organizations that are representative of, and accountable to, overrepresented communities, to equip them as operators of supportive housing; and

- Developing a data-driven system for assessing referrals based on disproportionality and vulnerability to continued homelessness.



**Figure 7: In 2022, HTH developed three intersection strategies that will promote racial equity and increase access to supportive housing for historically marginalized communities.** *These strategies will be rolled out in 2023 and 2024.*

Achieving housing equity is a collective endeavor. System wide transportation will require concerted efforts from every community, economic sector, and all levels of government. These strategies are expected to yield progress in future years toward reducing racial-ethnic disproportionality in homelessness across overrepresented groups.

### Is anyone better off?

Housing is medicine. HTH reflects this premise: that safe, stable, and affordable housing is a fundamental component of a person’s ability to gain and sustain health. By working creatively to develop new supportive housing capacity—such as Salmonberry Lofts—for some of our most vulnerable neighbors, HTH offers a dignified place for people directly impacted by chronic homelessness to rest, heal, and thrive.

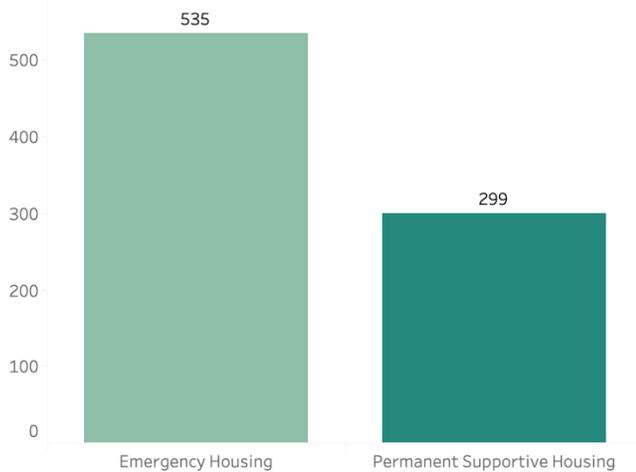
*“I want to give myself a hug. I’m on my path to do something for my life and my family. I’m doing what I need to do.”*

*— Health Through Housing resident*

HTH is directly changing lives. Over the course of 2022, 803 individuals were temporarily or permanently housed. Of which, 348 were permanently housed through HTH. HTH is close to its paramount goal of 1,600 units and will continue to identify units in 2023. By December 2022, HTH went from zero to 1,366 units of supportive housing added to increase regional pipeline and stock. This number of housed individuals and PSH units will both increase as newly opened buildings in Seattle’s Pioneer Square and Auburn achieve full occupancy in 2023.

Over the course of 2022, Health Through Housing (HTH) temporarily or permanently housed **803 people**.

Number of unique residents served by program type, January 1 - December 31, 2022:



**348 people** were permanently housed through HTH, 338 of whom were experiencing chronic homelessness.

Number of unique residents who were housed in HTH Permanent Supportive Housing or exited to permanent destinations in 2022:



**Figure 8: Health Through Housing has permanently housed 348 people.** Data from the Seattle-King County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Data as of 3/1/2023 and Provider Report 5/30/2023.

Housing stability is defined as not returning to homelessness. Therefore, if individuals move from chronic homelessness into HTH buildings, the program will have achieved success on that goal. As appropriate or as requested, onsite case managers will work with residents who want to move on to another type of housing once they have achieved improved health and stability. An example might be a person who stabilizes in a HTH unit who wants to move to an apartment with a kitchen. As the program name emphasizes, access to healthcare is a key component of a person's overall health and wellness, and the program know that people who do not have housing are profoundly challenged in accessing and benefiting from healthcare. This program will house people and then provide onsite and accessible services to help them gain health and stability.