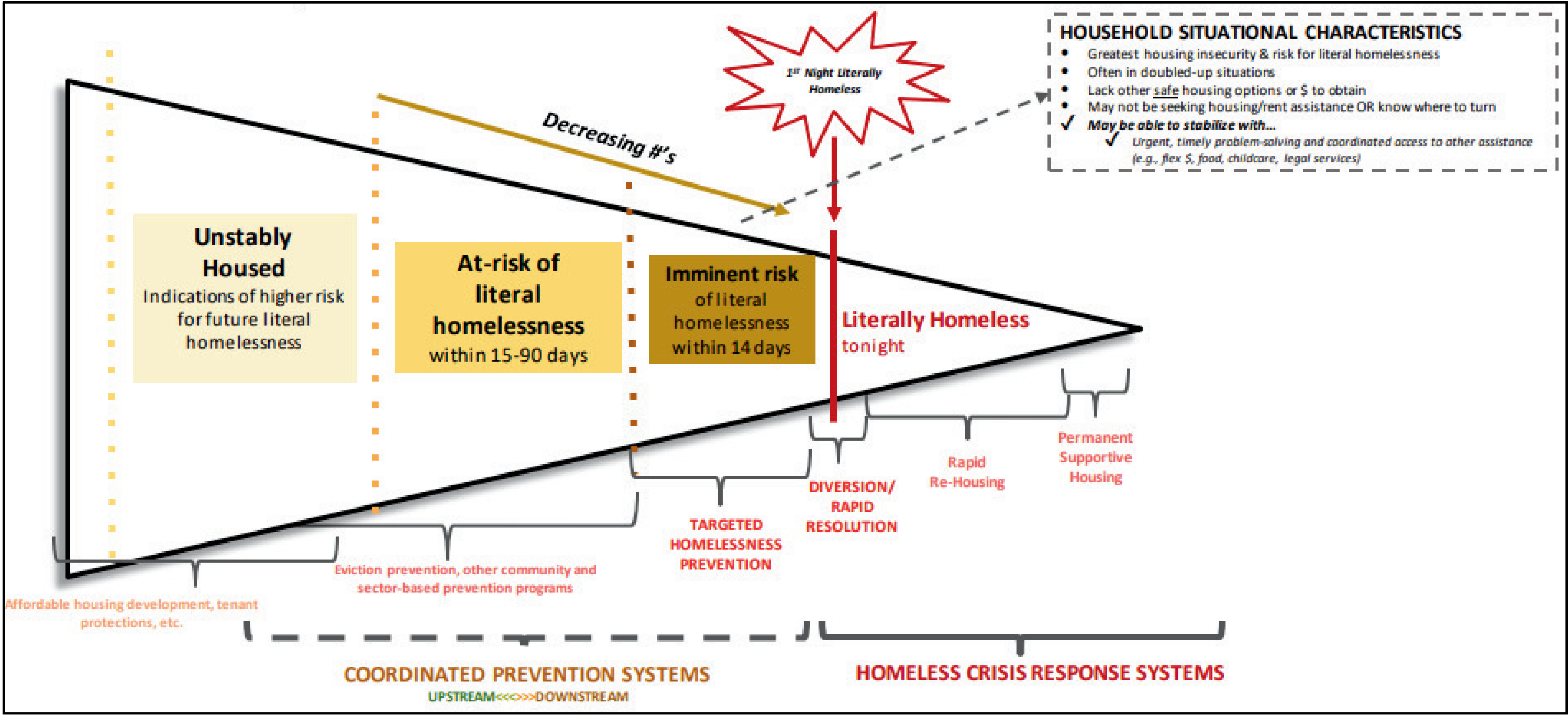


Prevent Episodes of Homelessness Whenever Possible

What this Objective Means

Individuals and families at risk of losing their housing maintain stable housing through:

- Homeless prevention programs offering case management and rental assistance.
- Mediation and legal resources.



Proposed Strategies

Targeted Homeless Prevention

- Prioritizes households most likely to become homeless and provide access on a first-come, first-served basis as program openings become available.
 - WCHCS Costs: Approx. \$15k per household per year.

Homeless Prevention Programs for Specific Populations

- Housing and Essential Needs (HEN): serves households who are disabled and unable to work; DSHS determines eligibility.
- HEN Foundational Community Supports (FCS) Bridge: serves households enrolled in FCS, yet no longer eligible for HEN due to increased income or other changes in eligibility.
 - WCHCS Costs: Approx. \$14k per household per year.
- Veterans Assistance: Serves Veterans with arrears or other at-risk situations.
 - WCHCS Costs: Approx. \$4k per household per year.
- Healthy Children’s Fund: Serves families who are severely cost burdened, unstably housed, or overcrowded and have child(ren) five years old or younger.
 - WCHCS Costs: Approx. \$6k-16k per household per year.

Dispute Resolution Center Housing Stability Program

- Impartial case management, coaching, conciliation, mediation, training and facilitation for tenants and housing providers.
 - WCHCS Costs: Approx. \$60 per household per year.

Preserve and create more affordable housing

- The best way to prevent homelessness is to improve housing market conditions, such as the cost and availability of rental housing.
- See the Create and Preserve more Affordable Housing objective.

New: Scale up existing resources providing civil legal aid about tenants’ rights

- Includes tenant clinics, free consultations and legal assistance for low-income renters, provision of educational materials and tools for tenants and landlords, and/or legal representation.
 - WCHCS Costs: Dependent on services offered, scalable – for instance educational materials would cost less than expanding free renter resources (i.e. pop up clinics).

New: Increase coordination and referral sharing between housing and social service providers

- Includes strengthening partnerships and pathways to housing for people exiting jail, treatment, systems of care; convening partners with a goal of ensuring there’s no wrong door for prevention programs; encourage case conferencing and referral sharing.
 - WCHCS Costs: WCHCS and housing/social service provider staff time.

Indicators of Success

- Increase housing stability and retention for individuals and families at-risk of homelessness.
- Decrease number of first time homeless and returns to homelessness.

Other Homeless Prevention programs in Whatcom County

Homeless Prevention programs offering time-limited case management and rental assistance for:

- Families with children in Whatcom County and Bellingham city limits (multiple programs).
- Seniors in Bellingham city limits.
- Families with children in Bellingham Public Schools where referrals are made by McKinney Vento Liaisons.
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF).
- Households being diverted from homelessness upon exiting the criminal justice system, behavioral health treatment, and other institutional settings.
- Community Health Behavioral Health Rental Assistance (CBRA) program providing long-term rental subsidy for highly vulnerable households with complex behavioral health needs.



WHATCOM COUNTY
**HEALTH AND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**





Create and Preserve More Affordable Housing



What this Objective Means

- Support large and small new development projects across the affordable housing continuum.
- Support the preservation of existing affordable housing units through rehabilitation and, if necessary, acquisition.
- Evaluate emerging trends/strategies in affordable housing development.

Proposed Strategies

Support for Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Projects in Rural Whatcom

- Cost: \$1,000,000/year (1/30th of total cost).
- Expected outcome is the development of 60 units of affordable housing every 3-5 years.

Support acquisition and construction of projects for new units of affordable housing across the County

- Cost: \$2,000,000/year (1/25th of total cost).
- Expected outcome is the development of 100 units of affordable housing every year.

Indicators of Success

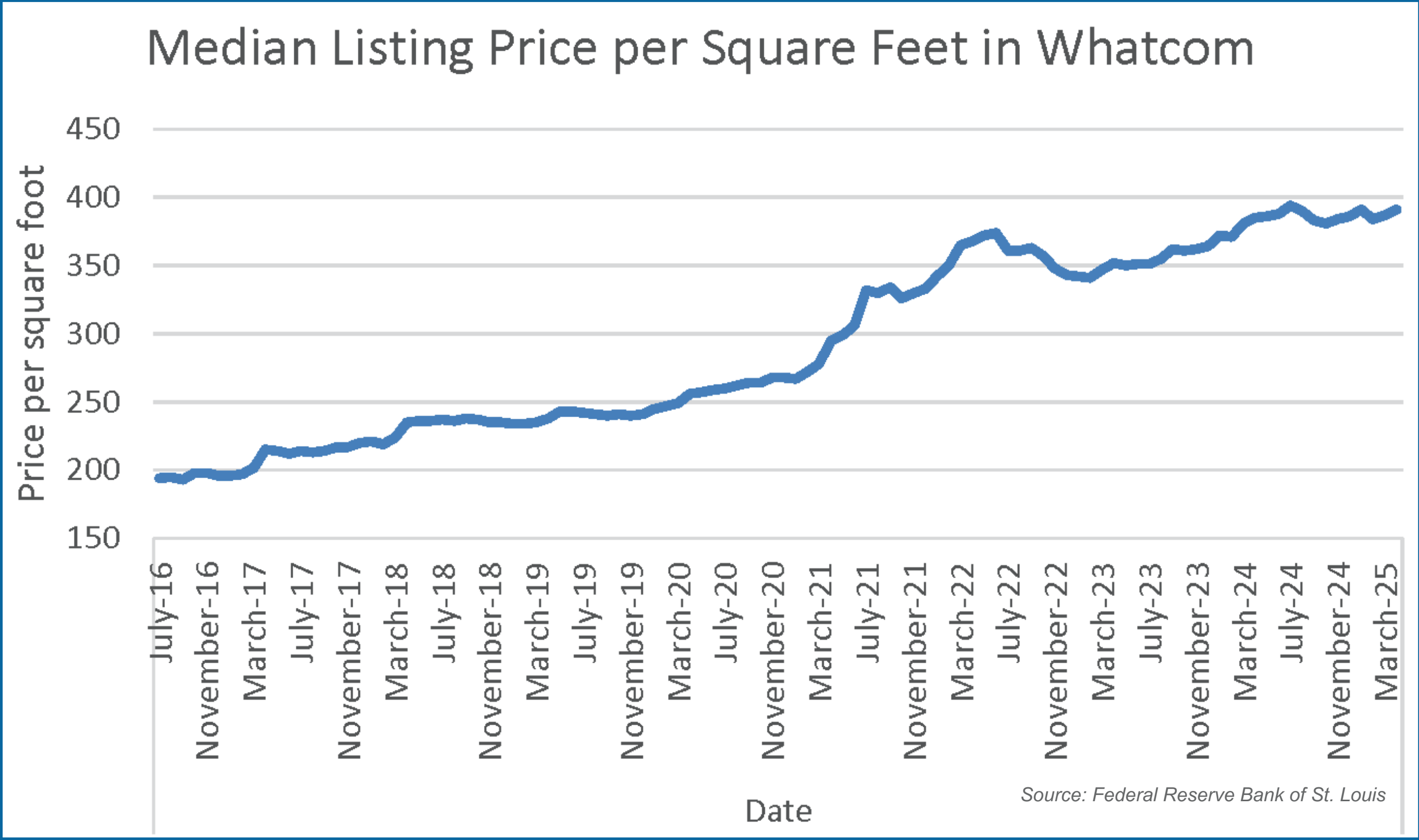
- Development of new units of affordable housing across the continuum.
- Reduced loss of affordable housing due to deteriorating physical conditions or expiring affordability covenants.
- Increased resiliency among affordable housing operators to respond quickly to emergent needs that could impact the safety and health of buildings.
- Increased capacity among affordable housing developers to advocate for systems improvements.

Cost to Build Multi-Family Affordable Housing

Fiscal Year	Median Cost Per Unit	Median Cost Per Square Foot
2019	\$207,496	\$239
2020	\$259,331	\$392
2021	\$262,331	\$284
2022	\$316,097	\$392
2023	\$301,744	\$494
2024	\$500,000	\$500

Source: 2019-2023 from Dept. of Commerce for State of Washington; 2024 data based on local estimates.

Cost of Existing Housing in Whatcom



New Proposed Strategies

New: Complete a county-wide inventory of affordable housing units, including building age, condition, and affordability period

- Costs: WCHCS staff time.
- Expected outcomes include: 1) identification of at-risk units, 2) better data to support policy and planning efforts, and 3) ability to forecast capital needs and prioritize expenditures over time.

New: Support developers with training and technical assistance to create ten-year capital needs assessments and preventative maintenance schedules

- Costs: \$15,000/year.
- Expected outcomes: Increase local developers' technical capacity to maintain and build affordable housing.

New: Leverage service and capital contracting process to ensure developers create and maintain adequate maintenance reserves

- Costs: \$0-\$5,000/year.
- Expected outcomes: Improved maintenance of current affordable housing developments.

New: Prioritize acquisition when cost to acquire is more affordable than the cost to build

- Costs: Indeterminant.
- Expected outcomes: Preservation of housing units that might otherwise convert to market-rate housing.

New: Convene workgroups to identify barriers to affordable housing development, evaluate and make recommendations for supporting emerging trends, and identify non-traditional funds to support development

- Costs: WCHCS staff time.
- Expected outcomes: (1) Increased awareness of barriers, (2) stronger ability to advocate for policy shifts, and (3) development of new funding streams.

Other Programs in Whatcom County

Federal funding for affordable housing includes:

- Low income housing Tax Credits
- HOME Investment Partnership Program
- Community Development Block Grants
- National Housing Trust Fund
- Public Housing Capital administered through HUD including Sec. 22 and 811

State funding for affordable housing includes:

- Washington State Housing Trust Fund
- Apple House and Home
- Transit Oriented Development through WSDOT

Local Funds:

- Local Use and Sales Tax
- Local philanthropy

Additional possible sources of funding for affordable housing include:

- Private equity/debt financing
- Community Development Financial Institutions
- Affordable housing bonds
- Philanthropy Whatcom Community Foundation offers bridge loans for construction of affordable housing.



Seek to House Everyone in a Stable Setting That Meets Their Needs



What this Objective Means

- We should develop and maintain **a wide range of programs and services** to overcome the variety of barriers facing homeless households, and ensure that different subpopulations have a viable path to resolving homelessness.
- There should be **equity in access to services** that can resolve peoples’ homelessness.

Proposed Strategies

Outreach for youth and young adults, and people in rural areas

- Outreach is an activity in which workers find people staying outside, such as on sidewalks or in encampments, provide them with survival gear, and connect them with resources.
- Costs: \$90,000/year
- Outcomes: (1) Better access to survival supplies; (2) Connection to resources; (3) Intakes into the housing Pool.

Transitional Housing

- Transitional housing operates similarly to a continuous-stay shelter, except that the household typically have access to a full unit with a private bath and kitchen facilities. Transitional housing is considered “transitional” in that people are eventually expected to move onto permanent housing without ongoing support.
- Costs: \$16,900 per program slot per year
- Expected outcome: 80% of households exit to permanent housing.

Rapid Rehousing

- Rapid rehousing is a rent subsidy program combined with case management, typically up to 24 months. Households rent units on the private rental market with support from a non-profit.
- Costs: Approximately \$16,000 per program slot per year
- Expected outcomes: (1) Average of 154 households served per quarter; (2) 80% of households exiting to permanent housing.

Permanent Supportive Housing & Housing with Services

- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is an evidence-based program model that helps formally homeless people living with a disability stay housed. PSH combines case management with a permanent rental subsidy.
- Housing with Services (HwS) operates similarly to PSH except that people do not need to have a disability to qualify for the program.
- WCHCS only pays for a portion of the total costs to run these programs.
- Costs: ~12,000 per household per year
- Expected outcomes: (1) Approximately 252 households served; (2) 95% of households either maintain housing or exit to a permanent housing destination.

New Proposed Strategies

New: Establish equity on Housing Pool case management across different populations

- Establish equity in Housing Pool management across different populations so that people with more barriers to housing get more support and/or reasonable accommodations to maintain themselves in the pool.
- Costs: \$0-400,000/year depending on services offered.
- Expected outcomes: People with higher needs can better-maintain themselves on the pool; fewer intakes needed to get people back into the pool; referrals for higher-acuity households happen more quickly.

New: Build programs’ capacity to serve currently underserved households

- Across different program types, people who identify as American Indian, Alaska Native or Indigenous are underrepresented in programs compared to the need shown in the Housing Pool.
- Key informants suggest that medically fragile adults, registered sex offenders, and people who’ve been convicted of arson find it difficult to access housing programs.
- Costs: Undetermined.
- Expected outcomes: Access to housing programs will not be different for minority and non-minority households; more vulnerable people will receive appropriate services; people with certain criminal histories will not systematically be refused services.

New: Implement recommendations from PSH evaluation

- Improve PSH retention and exits to permanent housing by implementing recommendations from independent evaluation, expected summer of 2025.
- Costs: Undetermined.

Indicators of Success

- A variety of services across the housing continuum are available to homeless households across different demographic groups.
- Homeless households receive services equitably.
- Interventions meet or improve on targeted outcomes by intervention type.

Other Housing and Outreach Programs in Whatcom County

- **Outreach programs:** Homeless Outreach Team (Opportunity Council), Road2Home outreach, Grace and LEAD programs operated by WCHCS for specific populations.
- **Transitional Housing:** Although declining in Whatcom County, transitional housing programs continue to be operated by several organizations for specific populations. This includes Engedi Refuge Ministries, New Ways Ministries, and the Lummi Housing Authority.
- **Rapid Rehousing:** WCHCS is the biggest funder of Rapid Rehousing in Whatcom County, however several other funding sources support Rapid Rehousing programs operated by the Opportunity Council, including the Federal HUD Continuum of Care program, HUD HOME funds, and the Dept of Veterans Affairs.
- **Housing with Services:** The Bellingham and Whatcom County Housing Authorities partner with local non-profits to offer support services in some of their rent-subsidized properties.
- **Permanent Supportive Housing:** WCHCS is not the sole funder for any PSH program in Whatcom County and does not fund the following programs: Dorothy Place (facility based), Lake Whatcom Center facility-based programs, Pioneer Human Services Community Leasing, and facility based programs at Sun Community Services.



Reduce Unsheltered Homelessness by Expanding Shelter Capacity



What this Objective Means

- Provide more individuals in need of temporary housing with access to a safe and supportive shelter environment.
- Provide both basic needs and enhanced services such as case management.
- Have shelter programs tailored and accessible to specific populations at all stage of homelessness.

Indicators of Success

- Reduction in unsheltered homelessness.
- Improved health outcomes for survivors of homelessness.
- Stability while waiting for permanent housing opportunities.

Programs in Whatcom

- Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS).
 - 5 units for families.
 - 16 for singles.
- YWCA Family Shelter – 19 units.
- Lydia Place Emergency Hotels for Families – 56 beds.
- Opportunity Council Emergency Hotels – 40 beds.
- Northwest Youth Services PAD – 8 beds.
- Lighthouse Mission Ministries – 300 - 400 beds.
 - 100 night by night beds.
 - 200-300 continuous stay beds for up to 90 days.
 - Addition of 20-30 beds in severe weather.
- Lake Whatcom Center - 8 beds.
- Homes Now Not Later! – 45 beds.
- Lummi Stepping Stone – 51 beds.
- HUSLY Northwest Youth Services – 4 beds.
- Lummi Victims of Crime – 40 beds.
- Recovery Café Day Shelter.
- Road2Home – 35 beds.
- Sun House – 10 beds.

Proposed Strategies

Maintain Current Shelters Specific to Subpopulations

- Shelter for people fleeing domestic violence.
- Families with Children and women-focused shelters.
- Youth shelter.
- Clean and sober recovery housing.
- Youth and young adult day shelter.
- Goal \$20,000 per bed per year.
- WCHCS is currently funding 118 beds.

New: Expand Tiny Home Villages

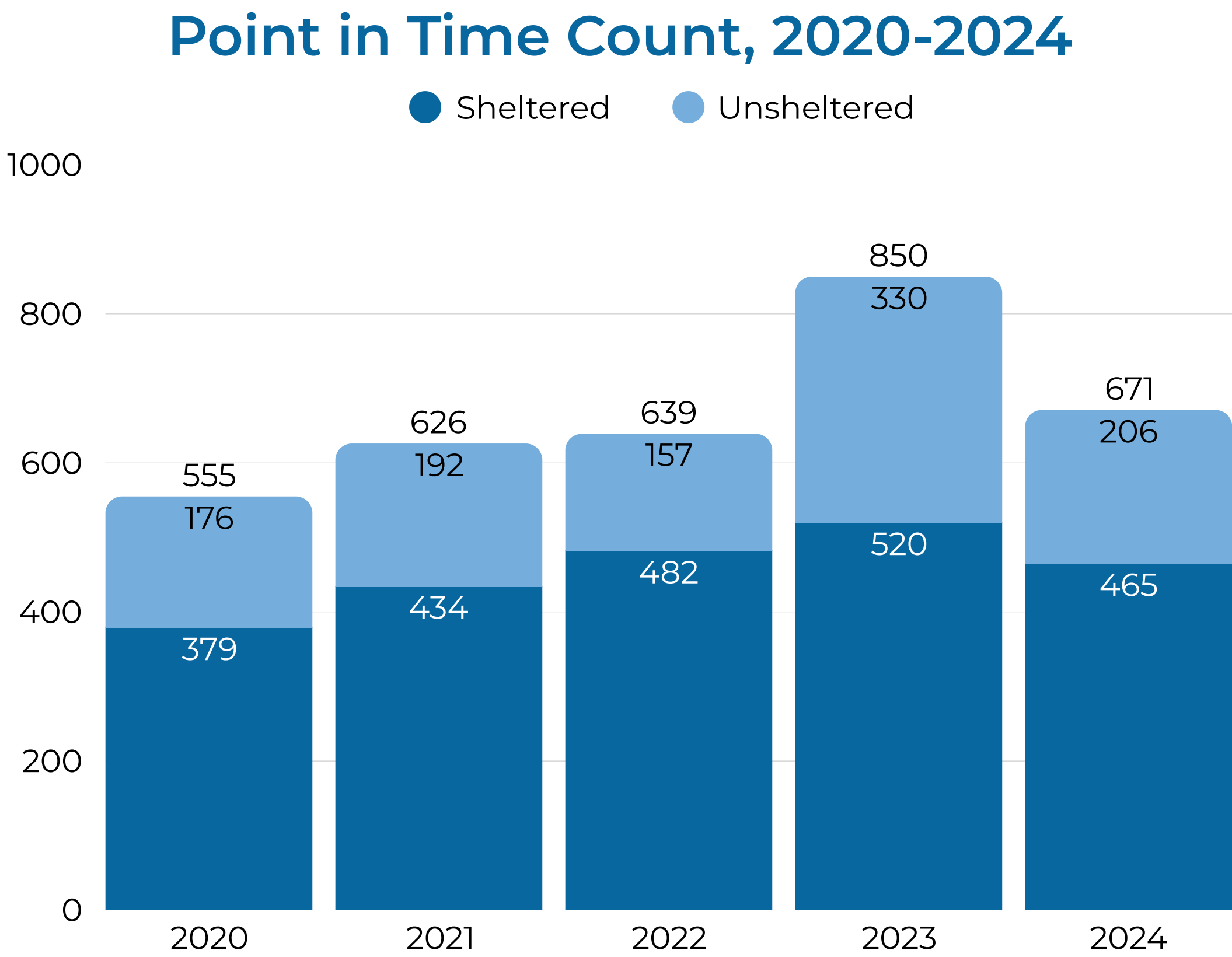
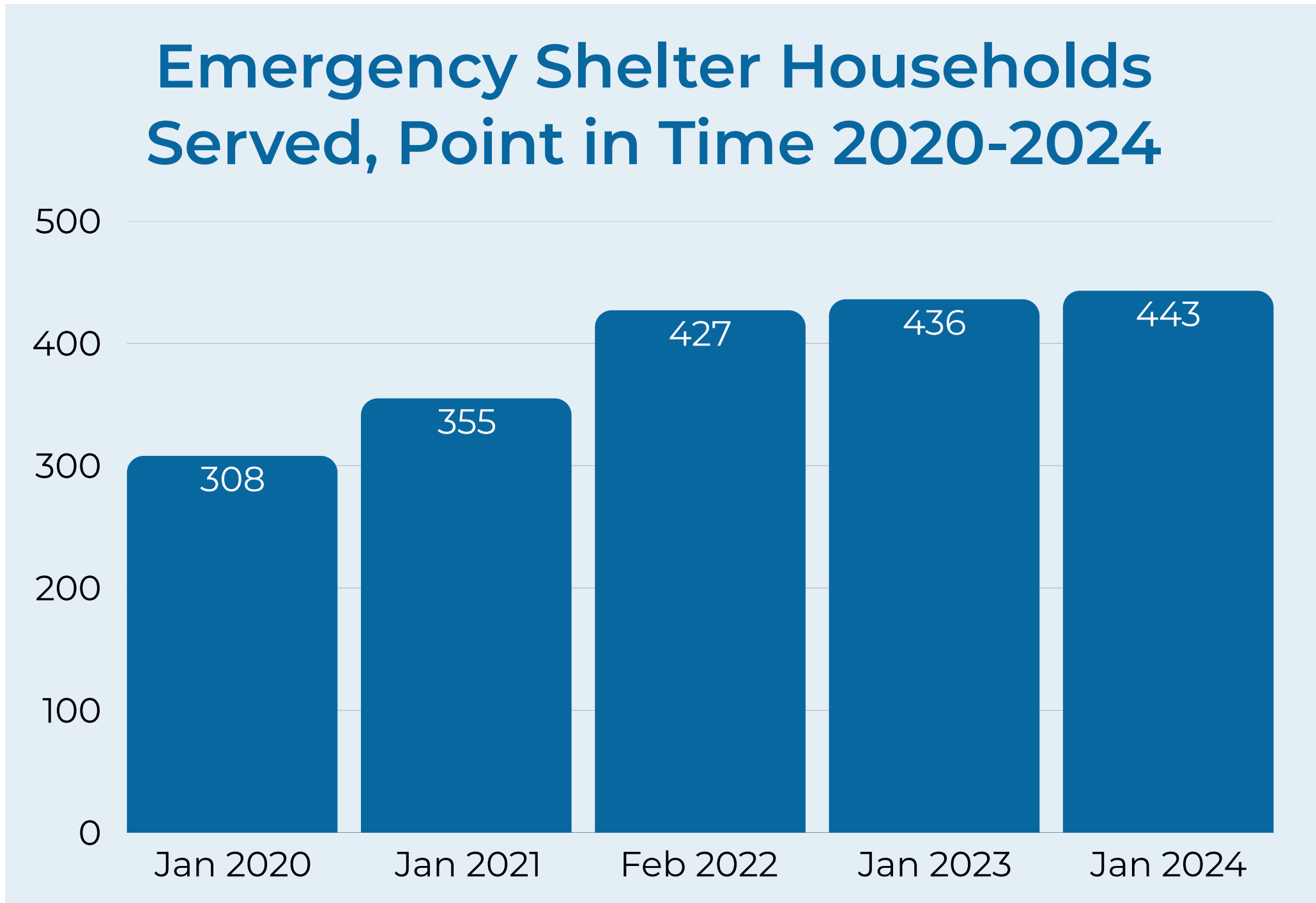
- Develop for specific population as a continuous stay shelter.
- Goal \$20,000 per bed per year.
- Currently funding 0 beds.

New: Congregate Shelter

- 200+ beds.
- Low barrier.
- Secular.
- Day shelter option.
- Capacity for surge during severe weather events.
- Goal \$20,000 per bed per year.
- WCHCS is currently funding 0 beds.

New: Increase 5-15 Bed Capacity for Severe Weathers Shelters

- Goal to fund \$100 per bed per night.
- WCHCS currently funding 95 beds.





Prioritize Assistance Based on Greatest Barriers to Housing Stability and the Greatest Risk of Harm



What this Objective Means

- Whatcom County receives state funds for homeless housing and must maintain a Coordinated Entry (CE) system.
- CE promotes system-wide coordination for a more effective and strategic response to homelessness.
- A CE prioritization policy identifies which households will receive accelerated assistance to available and limited housing resources.

Coordinated Entry in Whatcom

- Coordinated Entry (CE) is operated by the Whatcom Homeless Service Center, a department of Opportunity Council.
- Shelter and housing providers that receive referrals from CE:
 - Catholic Community Services
 - Lake Whatcom Center
 - Lydia Place
 - Northwest Youth Services
 - Opportunity Council
 - Pioneer Human Services
 - Road2Home
 - Sun Community Service
 - YWCA
- Whatcom County Health and Community Services, the Whatcom Homeless Service Center, and the Coordinated Entry Governing Body are responsible for the establishment and implementation of community CE processes.

Proposed Strategies

Maintain Current Coordinated Entry Operations

- CE operations are funded across multiple contracts with Opportunity Council, Northwest Youth Services, Ferndale Community Services, and Lydia Place.

New: Reduce Data Entry Lags Into Housing Pool

- Add one full time employee to expedite work (Costs approx. \$68k-80k per year).
- Use newer technology for the housing pool and/or switch to online system for immediate intake entries.

New: Divert Households from CE System

- Add one full time Housing Navigator (Costs approx. \$80k per year).

New: Update Assessment Tool

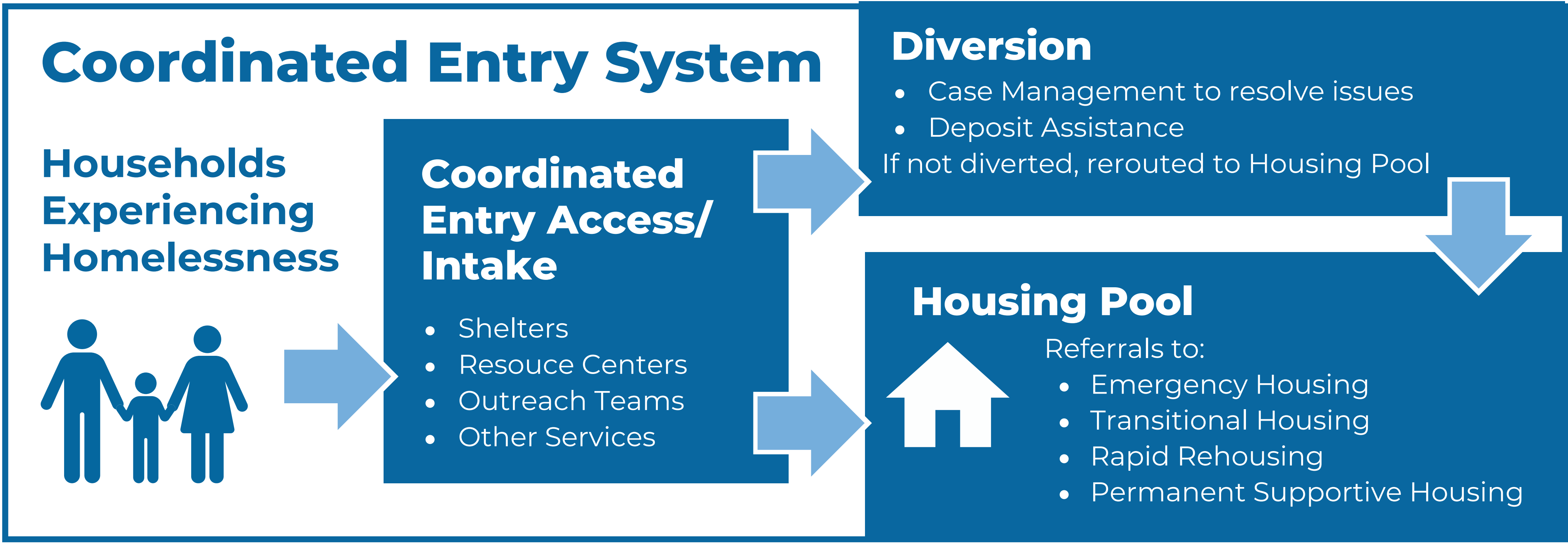
- Implement a more trauma-informed tool that only collects the minimum information needed to assess barriers and risks of harm (Costs current staff time).

New: Update Prioritization Policies

- Update with more specific criteria for prioritizing assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk for harm (Costs current staff time).

Indicators of Success

- A more efficient CE system.
- A more equitable and trauma-informed assessment and prioritization policies and practices.





Strengthen the Homeless Service Provider Workforce



What this Objective Means

- Increase technical capacity of staff, particularly direct service workers.
- Increase staff retention, particularly direct service workers.
- Increase career pathways for direct services workers.

Proposed Strategies

Offer trainings to support housing and behavioral health providers

- WCHCS offers training to professionals in the community on topics such as harm reduction, suicide prevention, and burnout prevention and recovery.
- Housing Team staff offer Crisis Prevention training to contracted providers.
- Costs: WCHCS staff time.
- Expected outcomes: (1) Increased knowledge among attendees; (2) Higher quality of services provided by workforce.

New: Expand training offers based on provider input

- Provide additional training opportunities for contracted providers identified by staff, such as Motivational Interviewing.
- Costs: \$10,000/year.
- Expected outcomes: Higher-quality services as identified via program monitoring.

New: Offer ongoing professional development and training for case managers across providers

- Opportunities specifically for case managers
- Costs: \$0-\$5,000/year.
- Expected outcomes: More fidelity to high-quality case management as identified via program monitoring.

New: Create/fund an internship program in partnership with local colleges with contracted providers

- Internship program funded by WCHCS to establish better pipeline from education to full-time employment.
- Costs: ~\$4,500/Intern.
- Expected outcomes: New staff enter full-time positions with a higher level of baseline knowledge/training, more applications for open positions, fewer unfilled positions for providers.

Indicators of Success

- Technical capacity: Fewer omissions and mistakes identified during onsite monitoring visits.
- Staff retention: Fewer staffing challenges identified as barriers to success amongst providers.
- Career pathways: New or strengthened pathways identified.

Other Workforce Development programs in Whatcom County

- **AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)**
- **Degree programs local colleges:**
 - Western Washington University: Human Services; Sociology; Law, Diversity & Justice.
 - Whatcom Community College: Social Work, Substance Use Disorder Professional.
- **Organizations that offer trainings to providers and the general public:**
 - United Way.
 - City of Bellingham.
 - Chuckanut Health Foundation.
 - North Sound Accountable Community of Health.
- **Large-scale educational events:**
 - Whatcom Housing Alliance’s Housing Week.
 - All Hands Whatcom.

WA Pay Equity Analysis

2023 Provider Workforce Study found that:

- Homeless Service Provider workers earn less, on average, than comparison occupations including: Affordable Housing Workers, Emergency Responders, and Para-Educators.
- Half of workers surveyed were required to be on call.
- 58% workers indicated their jobs offer regular Cost of Living Adjustments.
- Workers reported that:
 - Their compensation does not match the emotional labor required by the job.
 - Workers take on responsibilities outside of their job descriptions and expertise.
 - Other community-minded jobs are available that offer higher pay and lower stress.

BDS Planning and Urban Design. (2023). Homeless Service Provider Workforce Study: <https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/cp7zev6apgg7p5iw8v8wf16ep6p830>



Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system



What this Objective Means

- The homeless crisis response system should be transparent in the way that resources allocations are made, and on the outcomes produced.
- Regular reporting to the community offers transparency in how public dollars are spent and how the system is performing.
- WCHCS Housing should encourage providers to be accountable to the people receiving services by incentivizing people with lived experience to participate in program development.

Indicators of Success

- Equitable: Outcomes are similar among different subpopulations; differences in rates of homelessness between groups is decreasing.
- Accountable: Continued funding and support is informed by system performance.
- Transparent: Performance and budgetary information is readily accessible and understandable for the public.

Evidence of Progress

- Department of Commerce online dashboards.
- Annual Report on Homelessness (Whatcom Co.).
- Published Quarterly Reports on System Performance.

Proposed Strategies

Publish annual *Point in Time* and *Housing Pool* reports

- Communicate system-level information about homelessness in Whatcom County to track trends and measure broad impact.
- Costs: \$8,500 + Staff time.
- Expected outcomes: (1) Increased knowledge among attendees; (2) Higher quality of services provided by workforce.

Support public engagement events

- Opportunities for public to hear about housing system challenges and opportunities.
- Cost: Staff time and nominal fees to host events.
- Expected outcomes: Community input and engagement increase, more guidance in growth of housing system.

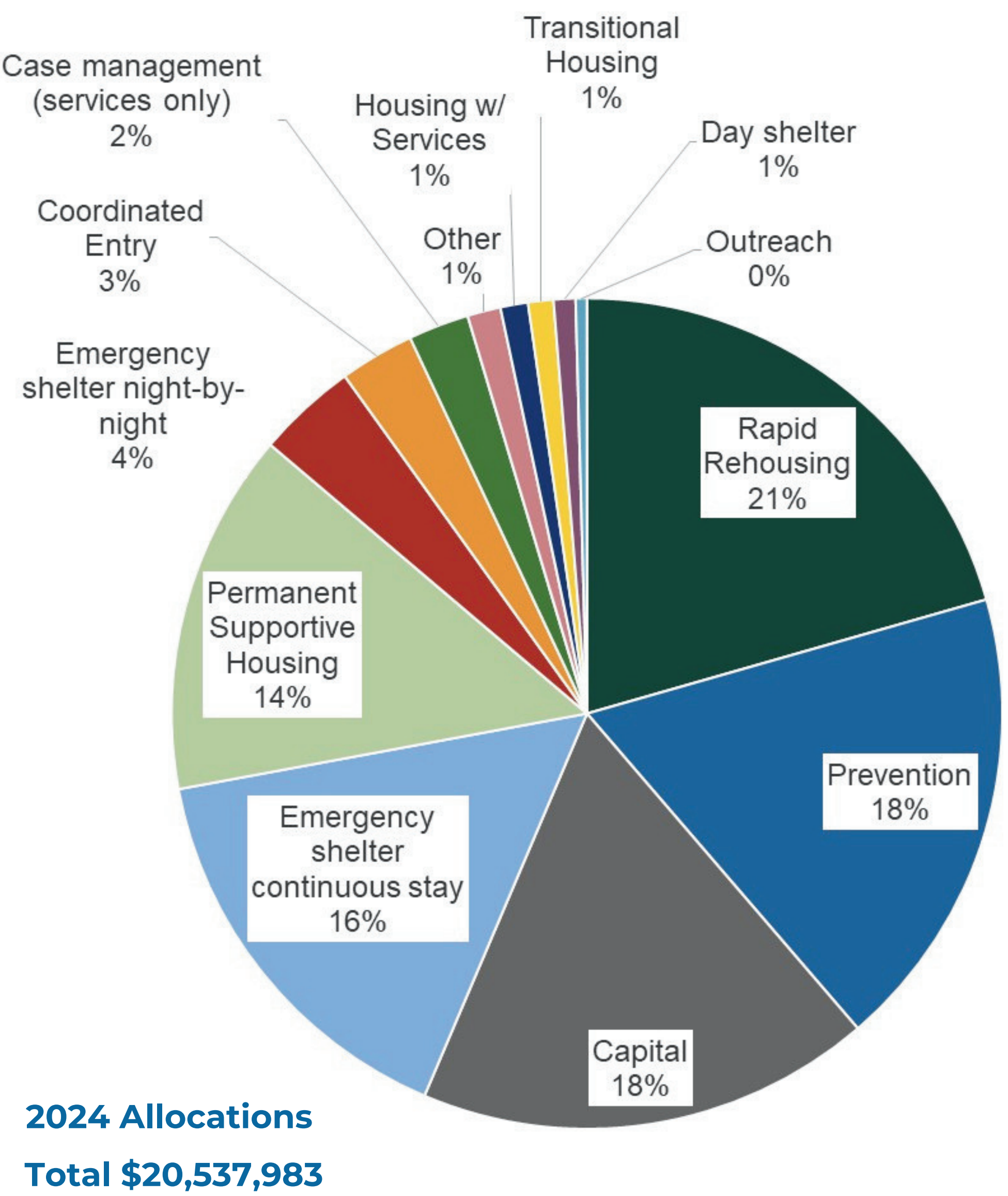
Support annual Housing Week events

- Help community understand connections between housing, health, and homelessness.
- Costs: \$5,000/year.
- Expected outcomes: Better informed neighbors can advocate for policies that promote community health.

Organize and lead provider meetings

- Service providers have better sense of funding and regulatory environment and can more effectively work together to create comprehensive network of services.
- Cost: staff time and nominal fees to host events.
- Expected outcomes: Fewer individuals or households are unserved because of system gaps; better input from providers to spur policy development that improves system performance.

How Your Money is Spent



New Proposed Strategies

New: Engage with Consultants

- Use third-party consultants to inform system improvements and recommendations.
- Costs: \$10,000-35,000/year.
- Expected outcomes: Objective reports and recommendations form basis for efficiency improvements and greater consistency.

New: Publish quarterly performance reports

- Increase focus on outcomes and initiate conversations about the results and impact.
- Costs: Staff time.
- Expected outcomes: Funding & support shifts to where most needed and effective.

New: Twice annual council presentations

- Present performance reports and other system updates in public forum with opportunity for guidance from elected officials.
- Costs: Staff time.
- Expected outcomes: Elected officials have better access to information about housing system and make informed long-term decisions to guide system growth.

New: Engage with individuals with lived experience

- Elevate the voices of people who have experienced or are currently experiencing homelessness; develop stronger systems for facilitating engagement and collecting input.
- Costs: \$0-\$5,000/year.
- Expected outcomes: Housing system is better aware of inequities and understands how current system impacts individuals seeking or utilizing services.