

Homeless Strategies Workgroup  
**COMMUNITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS\***

**2020 - 2021**

- 1. Temporarily relocated Lighthouse Mission Drop-In Center to Bellingham High School**
  - Under Whatcom Unified Command, city and county staff worked to relocate shelter to comply with pandemic-related requirements
  
- 2. Basecamp – Lighthouse Mission opened a year-round 200 bed shelter with additional services**
  - The City, with financial partnership from the County, moved the former Drop-In Center from the High School to a new location
  - Basecamp provides 200 beds, with built-in storage for belongings, all in compliance with social distancing
  - 3-year contract with one additional year renewal option
  - Additional services are available including shower, lockers, meals, and laundry
  
- 3. Civic Shower program offered twice weekly at Arne Hanna aquatic center**
  - Twice weekly free shower program operated by Arne Hanna staff provides showers for 15-20 people during each opening period
  
- 4. Overflow winter shelter space at the former Holly St Drop-In Center**
  - Lighthouse Mission Ministries, in partnership with Christ the King Church, expanded its capacity during the winter by 30 beds
  
- 5. Tiny home villages**
  - Road 2 Home and Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) to operate Gardenview Tiny Home Village at the City's Woburn Street property including 30 units (pending opening)
  - Homes Now operates Unity Village (extended permit) and Swifthaven, 45 units
  - Whatcom County purchased 20 modular buildings for tiny home villages
  - City of Bellingham provided land and issued RFP for operators, leading to a commitment of funding for Gardenview operations and case management
  
- 6. Point-In-Time count completed with staff and volunteers trained in past years**
  - Annual count was not required to be as widespread this year, but our community chose to expand the count beyond requirements and conduct a more comprehensive count
  
- 7. PAD Shelter remained open during the pandemic to serve four minors ages 13-17**

**8. The community dramatically increased support for motel stays for homeless families with children**

- The Homeless Service Center and service providers saw a drastic increase in demand for shelter services for families with children, which was addressed by service providers (primarily Lydia Place and Opportunity Council) stepping up to say 'yes' and increased funding for motels coming from the County, City, foundations and private donors

**9. YWCA provided additional emergency shelter to women**

- Using space made available due to pandemic closures, 9 beds

**10. \$4 million in state funding for Respite Center**

- Unity Care NW in partnership with the County, Peace Health, and the Opportunity Council received funding to open a respite care center (rest stop) with medical care and coordinated case management.
- County offers existing office space to house the respite center.

**11. Federal assistance for low-income renters**

- Millions from the federal government has been made available for rent assistance, which the community has worked hard to make broadly available and accessible, and also to pair with programs that serve homeless-on-entry households

**2019 - 2020**

**12. Year-Round Drop-in Shelter with case management**

- Lighthouse Mission had space for 190 people year-round, and were open 24/7. They served breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, and coordinate with services from partnering organizations.

**13. Day Center & Shelter**

- Northwest Youth Services operated The Ground Floor, a day center hosted at First Congregational Church, serving youth and young adults ages 24 and younger. Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham provided additional funding for shelter supplies, staff, and operations. Facilities offer restrooms, showers, meals, and case management services.

**14. Temporary Winter Shelter**

- Opportunity Council and City of Bellingham operated a winter shelter for women at Civic Stadium, for up to 35-40 women, check was at Lighthouse Mission, transport to site and back. Hours were 7am-7pm. Dec 1, 2019 –Feb 29, 2020.
- Northwest Youth Services operated a youth winter shelter at First Congregational Church, for up to 35 youths ages 13-24 Dec 2019 – Feb 2020.

## **15. Severe Weather / Emergency Shelters**

- Christ the King Church provided shelter capacity for 60 people (men and people with special health needs)
- Fountain Community Church hosted shelter capacity for 60 people with no restrictions. They provided space, materials, and staff/volunteers
- Garden Street Methodist Church offered shelter capacity for 15 people (families)
- Seventh Day Adventist offered shelter capacity for 30 people (men, women, families)
- Daily shelter updates available were available by phone at 360-788-7983
- Whatcom County issued a call for partners for shelters with an aim to identify secular organizations, but no secular organizations came forward.
- Whatcom County worked to coordinate messaging around shelters during winter weather

## **16. Training for Shelter Volunteers**

- Whatcom County Health Department and the Opportunity Council trained 60 shelter volunteers at 4 trainings in fall 2019.

## **17. Small Specialized Shelters**

- Youth - NWYS The PAD
- Domestic Violence - DVSAS year-round emergency shelter
- Women, emergency/transitional housing - YWCA
- Mental health - Sun Community Services operates Sun House
- Families - Interfaith/Family Promise
- Native Americans - Lummi Stepping stones operated 2 shelters and a tiny home village

## **18. Laundromat**

- City of Ferndale opened a community laundromat in Pioneer Marketplace and offered 1,000 vouchers.

## **19. Restrooms**

- City of Ferndale - 24-hour bathroom at Star Park.
- Lighthouse Mission had 2 porta-potties at the Drop-In Center.
- The City of Bellingham had located 3 porta-potties.
- The City of Bellingham completed 24-hour access restrooms at Maritime Heritage Park.
- Northwest Youth Services operated a day center at First Congregational Church

## **20. Showers**

- Lighthouse Mission had a shower trailer that was added to their Outreach program in Winter 2019 (Shower Connect) and provided 2,500 showers, 4 days a week at 4 different sites furthering homeless relationship building and inclusion, and fostering next steps in services.

- HomesNow has a shower truck for tiny home residents. Once a month takes shower trailer to Maritime Heritage Park for a summit. Offers 1,500 showers per year
- YMCA offers a limited number of shower passes – they are at capacity

### **21. Lockers**

- BasicsPNW ran a locker truck every Saturday into May 2019 at Maritime Heritage Park (on hold to focus on establishing permanent locker project)

### **22. Garbage Collection**

- City of Bellingham, Public Works offered dumpsters for homeless community to discard their belongings when needed. There were 3 dumpsters available as part of a pilot program, including one at the dead end of Cornwall Ave, one 1 across the street from City Hall, and one at James and Woodstock by Kmart pond. The dumpsters at Woodstock and across from City Hall were considered for removal because of the abuse. The dumpster at the end of Cornwall had been utilized by the intended user group, which had taken on the responsibility for keeping it clean and making sure that it is used correctly. Dumpsters were emptied twice a week, and the solid waste fund paid for the operations, which totaled \$14,200 a year plus damages. There were challenges with dumping (construction materials and large furniture) and policing. City staff recommended discontinuing all but the Cornwall dumpster.

### **23. Crisis Stabilization Center**

- Whatcom County construction of the Crisis Stabilization Facility. Ground breaking: October 2019

### **24. Tiny Home Villages**

- Update codes to allow for temporary tiny home villages
  - City of Bellingham adopted an ordinance regulating tiny home villages.
  - Whatcom County adopted an ordinance regulating tiny home villages.
  - HomesNow completed Winterhaven behind Bellingham City Hall (vacated), SpringHaven in Sunnyland (vacated) and Unity Village at Post Point location – lease is through April 30, 2020 (extended).

### **25. Communications to Homeless population**

- Whatcom County and City of Bellingham Staff coordinated to develop information about winter and severe weather shelters. Information was posted online and a telephone hotline offered a regularly updated message about shelters and check in process.
- HomesNow has an online dashboard of information.
- Lighthouse Mission distributes information with the approximately 400 people they see daily
- Opportunity Council, Homeless Services Center – offers services and information to clients
- Opportunity Council manages online Community Resource Guide:  
<https://internal.opcco.org/resources/guide.php>
- GRACE team can distribute information to clients

## **26. Communications to the general public**

- Joint editorial on homelessness released in November 2019

## **27. Safe Parking**

- City of Bellingham City Council approved a request from staff to 1) attempt to find a partner to initiate a Safe Parking Pilot Program; and 2) fund (fully or in part) such a program. (1/27/2020)
- Confirmed with First Baptist that they are not able to expand services at this time.
- City of Ferndale acknowledges many park overnight in parking lots at parks

## **28. Social Inclusion**

- Lighthouse Mission launched Street Connect in Spring 2018 doing evening outreach to homeless camps and individuals throughout Bellingham. It's year-round, 4 nights a week. They've seen a 15-20% increase in guests accessing the Drop-in Center, which they attribute to the effectiveness of their outreach.
- Opportunity Council runs a Homeless Outreach Team

## **29. Landlords**

- Landlord Liaison
  - The Opportunity Council works with landlords who have existing units. Both the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County are funding this position through the OC.
  - Housing Authority also has a similar position specific to their voucher programs

## **30. Case Management**

- Light Touch case management services available for those with lower vulnerability, more social/job skills to get them on their feet and housed quickly.
  - Opportunity Council pursued and received a capacity building foundation grant to pay for 0.5 FTE of light touch services. The City provided funding to continue light touch & diversion services.

*\* Summary document created by County Council staff, with input from HSW Members, County Health Department and City of Bellingham staff. This is not intended to be a complete summary of accomplishments, just some highlights.*