



Snohomish County
Office of the Executive
Aaron Reardon
County Executive

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Reardon initiates affordable housing/homelessness plans

Snohomish County began a timely initiative Friday geared toward ending homelessness and increasing affordable housing by convening the first meeting of the Housing & Homelessness Policy Oversight Committee.

The committee coincides with other efforts the county will make this year to tackle two of the most pressing issues facing Snohomish County. Among those are this Tuesday's Workforce Housing Summit at the Lynnwood Convention Center and the Point in Time homeless count scheduled for Jan. 24 throughout the county.

Executive Aaron Reardon convened Friday's committee meeting, gathering around him nearly 40 members of the community. Represented are leaders from local and state government, the housing and real-estate industry, educators, nonprofit executives, business leaders and members of the faith community.

"The work you do today will be implemented into county policies and ordinances," Reardon told the group. "This won't be another committee without an outcome. We will get the job done."

The committee will be asked to make suggestions on how best to establish benchmarks for forthcoming homeless and housing initiatives as well as guide long-term strategies.

There are several obstacles to adding affordable housing units in Snohomish County and to decreasing the number of homeless living here. One is the widening gap between housing prices and income, committee members said Friday.

"I have watched people struggle through such crises," said County Councilman Mike Cooper, a member of the committee. "Every day, there are families one paycheck away from being homeless."

The committee is expected to meet at least three more times before the Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County – a nonprofit membership organization searching for solutions to the county's housing challenges – complete its forthcoming Affordable Housing Action Plan.

The consortium is partly targeting housing issues facing seniors, the homeless and persons with disabilities.

During last year's Point in Time count, more than 2,600 individuals were estimated to be homeless, not including nearly 350 incarcerated individuals with no identified residence upon release.

Snohomish County is currently recruiting volunteers to assist in this year's Point in Time count. The annual measurement helps the county not only assess the number of homeless families and individuals living here, but since 2006 has become an integral part of the county's 10-year "Everyone at Home Now" plan to end homelessness.

To volunteer for the annual count, contact Sola Plumacher at (425) 388-7289.

On Tuesday, about 100 business leaders are expected to come together at the free Workforce Housing Summit. There they will learn how offering an employer-assisted housing benefit to employees can improve retention and morale.

The summit is being coordinated by Snohomish County and is sponsored by Freddie Mac, BECU, United Way of Snohomish County and HomeSight.

For more information or to register, visit www.chcs.com/homesight.

Information:

"Everyone at Home Now:

http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Everyone_At_Home_Now.htm

Snohomish County: www.co.snohomish.wa.us

Freddie Mac: www.FreddieMac.com

United Way of Snohomish County: <http://www.uwsc.org/>

HomeSight: <http://www.homesightwa.org/>

BECU: <https://www.becu.org/>

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