



Snohomish County
Office of the Executive
Aaron Reardon
County Executive

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Contact: Christopher Schwarzen

Office: (425) 388-3883

Email: Christopher.Schwarzen@snoco.org

County assists employees with homeownership

Snohomish County government will invest in the community by offering its employees new opportunities and classes for gaining home ownership.

The effort was announced by County Executive Aaron Reardon at Tuesday's Snohomish County Workforce Housing Summit held at the Lynnwood Convention Center. The purpose of the summit was to teach employers in Snohomish County the benefits of helping their workers purchase a home.

Snohomish County will partner with two existing programs to better educate employees on their home-buying options.

The first program, called the Workforce Home Benefit program, is offered through Freddie Mac. Through Freddie Mac, the county will address the need for employee housing assistance by linking buyers with education, down-payment assistance and properly suited mortgage-financing options as well as financial counseling.

The second program, run by the not-for-profit Home for Good, offers a two-year lease-to-own program with homeownership counseling and tools to build a successful financial foundation.

The county's Human Resources Department is planning classes in 2008 to educate county employees on homeownership opportunities and programs. In addition, employees will be able to connect with both existing programs through Snohomish County's Intranet Web site.

"Homeownership is an American dream we want to make available to Snohomish County residents and employees," Reardon said. "But we see people buying over their limit, forcing them to spend too high a percentage of their monthly income trying to keep that house."

Increasing affordable-housing options in Snohomish County tops Reardon's agenda for his second term. More than 100 people attended Tuesday's conference promoting housing help to low- and middle-income residents.

"We knew today's conference would be a success among the county's employers," Reardon said. "So we're already planning a second summit to address even more ideas and opportunities for homeownership."

Tuesday's conference followed closely on the heels of the premier meeting of the Snohomish County Housing & Homelessness Policy Oversight Committee launched Friday by Reardon. The committee is charged with making recommendations on benchmarks and strategies for implementing forthcoming homeless and housing initiatives.

"The Oversight Committee will help us take strategic action to get homeless families back in a home," Reardon said. "It also will help us increase available affordable housing and educate residents so they avoid the pitfalls that cause many to live one paycheck away from homelessness."

During last January's Point in Time count, more than 2,600 individuals were estimated to be homeless in Snohomish County not including nearly 350 incarcerated individuals with no identified residence upon release. The county will conduct its 2008 Point in Time homeless count on Jan. 24.

Snohomish County is currently recruiting volunteers to assist in this year's Point in Time count. To volunteer for the annual count, contact Sola Plumacher at (425) 388-7289.

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

Home for Good: www.buildingequity.org

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