



**Snohomish County**  
**Office of the Executive**  
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### **Reardon's housing task force sets priorities**

Snohomish County's newest housing and homelessness task force will target issues concerning manufactured-housing preservation, homeless veteran housing and homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income families.

The Snohomish County Housing and Homelessness Policy Committee met last week to discuss how best to handle its charge of creating short-term and long-term strategies for ending homelessness and creating new housing initiatives.

Following a recommendation made at the meeting, three workgroups are being formed to focus on manufactured housing communities, veterans housing and eliminating barriers to homeownership.

"Solving these issues is in no way going to be easy," Reardon said. "But these groups are going to help us make some strong, solid recommendations that will result in new housing options for all Snohomish County residents."

Reardon convened the committee in January after announcing that a priority of his second term was to focus on increasing housing opportunities for all residents and ending homelessness. Reardon said then that the best course for both was to tackle the two together.

About 40 members of the community – representing nonprofits, homebuilders, real-estate professionals, faith-based networks and government – have joined the committee.

During the March 7 meeting, members learned the difficulties between building new homes and keeping them affordable.

"The variables between a profit and loss for development are very tight," Reardon said. "Our challenge is to grow the number of affordable housing options and to reduce the number of currently cost-burdened homeowners."

In Snohomish County, nearly 30 percent of residents are still renting a home, mostly because of the high price of starter houses. The pre-construction cost of building a single-family home in Snohomish County last year topped \$200,000 including land, utilities, permitting, infrastructure and mitigation fees.

County Councilmen Mike Cooper and Brian Sullivan will co-chair the subgroup focusing on manufactured-housing conversions. The two council members have expressed an interest in finding ways to prevent manufactured-housing-community closures.

Many of Snohomish County's senior citizens live in manufactured-housing communities as an affordable-housing option. They cannot afford new homes when these locations are closed for new, higher-priced development.

Sullivan was a leading advocate in the state Legislature on this issue, and Cooper has made creating housing opportunities while protecting open space a top priority.

Reardon has asked the subgroup to work with the county Planning Department on options for preserving existing parks; providing affordable replacement housing for residents of threatened parks; enabling creation of new manufactured home parks; and, creating more options for manufactured homeowners before parks are threatened.

Underscoring the need to further help homeless veterans is the fact that at least 260 of the more than 1,800 residents reported homeless during the January Point In Time Count said they had served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Homeownership issues will be dealt with in connection with the Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County – a nonprofit membership organization searching for solutions to the county's housing challenges. The group is writing an Affordable Housing Action Plan and targeting housing issues facing seniors, the homeless and persons with disabilities.

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