

# Island County 5 Year Homeless Housing Plan 2025-2030



## Participants and Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Island County Community for participating in this plan. Without your contributions this plan would be far less comprehensive and effective. Thank you for the Homeless Housing Task Force for leading this effort and taking the time to attend meetings, provide input, critique and discuss what should go into this plan. Thank you to all of the service providers in the Island County community that provide direct services and support to Island County residents. These existing services are the foundations for which this plan can be built on. And thank you to all the people who are unhoused who filled out a survey and provided information to help create this plan. The hope is that this plan will create more opportunities and better support.

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## Introduction

Washington state law requires that each local community develop and publish a 5 Year Homeless Housing Plan. Part of this plan includes forming a Homeless Housing Task Force to adopt the 5 objectives identified by the Washington State Department of Commerce and tailor these objectives to meet local needs. This plan must include strategies or actions to meet these objectives, timelines for completion and measures of success or performance. This Task Force must develop a plan and recommend it to its government legislative authority for its jurisdictional area and adoption (RCW 43.185C.050, RCW 43.185C.080).

The local plan must be within the guidelines issued by the Department of Commerce as published in the 2025-2030 Local Homeless Housing Plan Guidance. The local plan must cover the five-year period from 2025-2030. The two largest cities in Island County, Oak Harbor and Coupeville must be included in the plan pursuant to (RCW 43.185C.080 and RCW 43.185C.160).

## Work Plan

The Island County Homeless Housing Task Force initially met on June 25, 2025 to review the process and to adopt the 5 Objectives identified by the 2024-2029 Washington State Homeless Housing Plan. The Task Force met three more times on July 23, 2025, August 27, 2025 and October 8, 2025 to create and discuss the local action steps, measures, timelines and action takers for this plan. A Homeless Housing Survey developed by the Task Force was distributed to households currently experiencing unsheltered homelessness and sheltered homelessness to help inform the plan.

The Island County 5 Year Homeless Housing Plan 2025-2030 Draft was distributed over email and posted on the Island County website at islandcountywa.gov for public comments January 21, 2026 through February 13, 2026. In addition, it was presented at 3 community meetings in conjunction with Island County Planning and the Island County Comprehensive Plan Draft. These meetings were located in Oak Harbor on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026 , Clinton on January 20<sup>th</sup> and Camano Island on January 24<sup>th</sup>. Island County Public Health also reviewed the plan using the Health Impact Analysis (HIA) Review and made recommendations in four areas to strengthen gaps in environmental health and behavioral health. The plan was also presented to the city of Oak Harbor Leadership and the Oak Harbor Police Community Advisory Board. Feedback was also sought from Island Senior Resources and The Camano Center.

The Task Force sees this as a plan that will grow and adapt each year as needs change in the community and funding levels are adjusted. If we have learned anything in the last 5 years, it is that plans always need to be flexible to meet the current needs of

the community and to best serve those most vulnerable community members. The Task Force recommends an annual review and updates as mandated by the Washington State Department of Commerce.

## **Vision and Goals**

Like Washington State's Department of Commerce, Island County shares the core value that everyone deserves to be housed. Food, shelter and water are the fundamental needs that all people require to survive and grow from. Shelter aka housing has become a more and more challenging need to meet. Since the last plan was written in 2019, a global pandemic occurred changing people's lives, communities and resources. The cost of living especially housing has gone up dramatically. A Harvard University Joint Center for Housing Study showed that 48.9% of Oak Harbor renters are rent burdened, paying over 30% of their income towards rent. Almost 20% are severely cost burdened meaning they pay over 50% of their income towards rent.

This has led to an increase of households who are one crisis away from becoming unhoused. In writing this plan, Island County hopes to put forth some concrete steps to take in the next 5 years to address the needs of the unhoused in our community and prevent more households from falling into homelessness. The following statements guided this plan.

**Vision: Everyone experiencing homelessness and housing instability has swift and equitable access to stable housing that meets their needs.**

**Goal: Homelessness in Island County is prevented, and in cases when it does occur, that it is a brief, rare and a one-time experience.**

This Plan will look at the Current State of Homelessness in Island County, the Current Affordable Housing Market, and the Current Service Levels. It will outline projections for what the housing and service level needs are for the next 5 years. And it will identify fund sources that are being used and are available to this county and what factors are used to determine how this funding is distributed. This information along with the community knowledge and expertise that the Homeless Housing Task Force brings will guide the formation of the Island County Objectives and Action Plan that will be recommended for community adoption by the Island County Board of Commissioners.

## Current State of Homelessness and Housing in Island County

There has been a lot of change in Island County since the last Homeless Housing Plan was written in 2019. This plan will use a variety of tools to illustrate where we are at currently with homelessness and housing instability. This allows us to create a plan that will move us forward over the next 5 years to create a community that meets people where they are at when they are unhoused, provides additional shelter, housing and resources, and also assists in preventing households from experiencing a housing crisis.

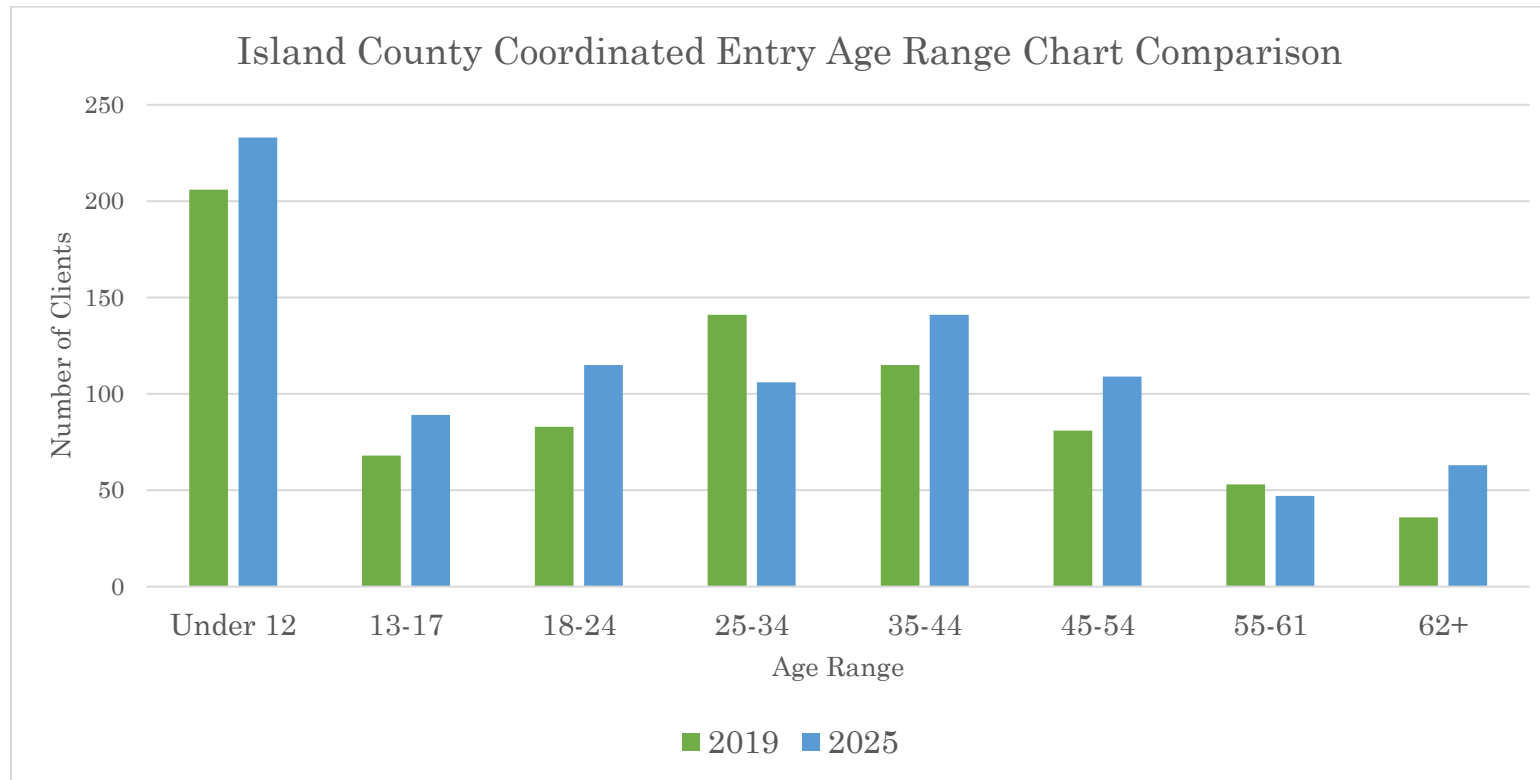
### 2025 Island County Point In Time Results

On January 30, 2025, the annual Point In Time Count was conducted in Island County. This is an annual count and surveying of everyone experiencing homelessness in each county in Washington State. This count happens throughout the United States and is mandated by HUD. The households being counted are unsheltered people and people living in emergency shelter or transitional housing programs. Point in Time (IT) only accounts for households for one night of the year, so therefore is only a snapshot of homelessness. Research shows that the number is 2-3 times less than the actual number for unsheltered homeless but can show trends over time. Below are the results for 2025 Point In Time Count for Island County.

| <b>2025 Point In Time Totals</b> | <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Households</b> |                |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Total People                     | 173                | 136               |                |
|                                  |                    |                   |                |
| <b>Housing Type</b>              | <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Households</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
| Total in Emergency Shelter       | 71                 | 56                | 41.0%          |
| Total in Transitional Shelter    | 25                 | 14                | 14.5%          |
| Total Sheltered                  | 96                 | 70                | 55.5%          |
| Total Unsheltered                | 77                 | 66                | 44.5%          |

## Coordinated Entry

In 2019, the amount of people served in Coordinated Entry who were unhoused or at imminent risk of being unhoused was 783. In 2025 that number rose to 903. When broken down by age, most categories increased. However, the largest increases were seen in some of our most vulnerable populations – young adults ages 18-24 and seniors aged 62 and over. The chart below with data pulled from our Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) illustrate these changes below.



When looking at data in HMIS for our Night By Night Shelters in Island County, there had been a significant increase in usage. For The Haven, our Night by Night Shelter serving adults and families there had been 88 people utilizing services in 2019. By 2025 that had risen to 138. In 2019 we did not have a Night by Night Shelter for Young Adults, but after an increase in need, Ryan's House for Youth started a Night by Night Shelter in 2022 and by the end of 2025, they were serving 43 Young Adults between the ages of 18-24.

Ryan's House for Youth also reported an increasing inability for young adults to secure housing. Their case managers have reported that with the rising costs of rent, lack of credit scores for young adults and with increasing reluctance from property managers to rent to roommate households, securing rental housing has become much more difficult. In addition, when young adults turn 25 years old, they are left with even fewer resources if they have been unable to secure housing and must leave the program that has provided them with stability.

When reaching out to our local senior service providers, Island Senior Resources reported that affordable housing is a large concern for their clients. They reported that between February 2025 and February 2026, of the 1010 senior households reaching out to them for services, 430 senior households identified housing and utilities as their most urgent need.

## Snapshot of Homelessness

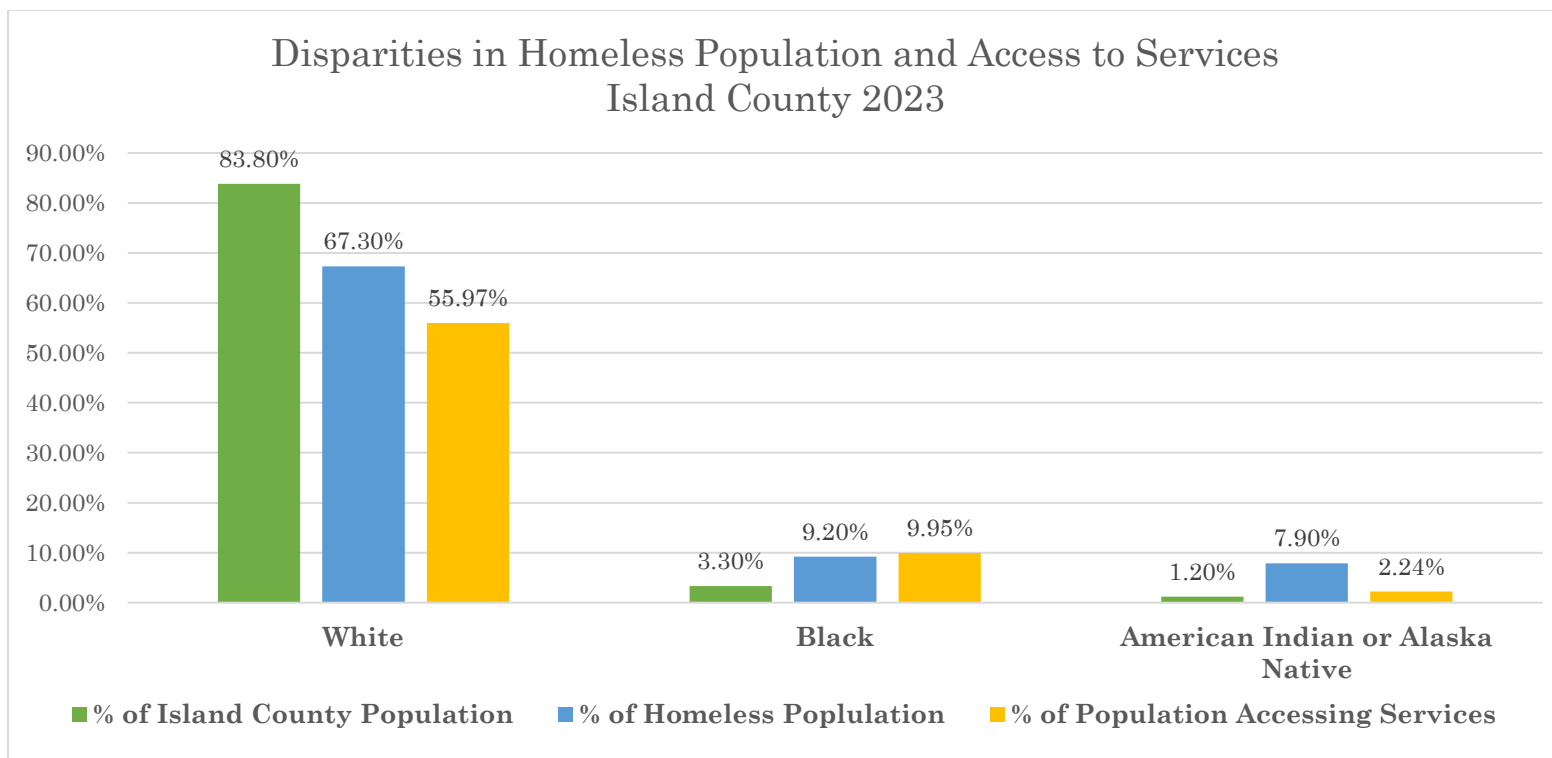
Washington State Department of Commerce has begun using the Snapshot of Homelessness as a more accurate tool to reflect how many people are experiencing both homelessness and unstable housing in each county in Washington State. This snapshot collects data from multiple sources including Medicaid, Economic Services and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). As rents, utilities and food costs all continue to rise, housing stability continues to decrease. Because of the shift in these economic realities the snapshot of homelessness takes into account all of these conditions and risk factors.

According to the January 2025 Snapshot of Homelessness in Washington State, Island County has 1,229 homeless or unstably housed people. The household break downs are summarized in the charts below. The chart outlines the breakdown of household types in Island County and compares these numbers to Washington State and neighboring counties.

**Unstably Housed or Homeless Persons, by Household Type and Area for January 2025**

| Area             | Total   | Youth (18-24) without minors | Adults without minors | Single parent with minors | Two parents with minors | Minors only | Unknown |
|------------------|---------|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------|
| Washington State | 201,809 | 13,235                       | 120,627               | 39,222                    | 27,959                  | 546         | 203     |
| Island County    | 1229    | 99                           | 779                   | 208                       | 141                     | <11         | <11     |
| Skagit County    | 3244    | 191                          | 1948                  | 684                       | 406                     | <11         | <11     |
| Whatcom County   | 5500    | 330                          | 3476                  | 941                       | 736                     | 16          | <11     |
| Jefferson County | 724     | 35                           | 534                   | 98                        | 56                      | <11         | 0       |

We continue to see disproportionate numbers of people of color in our homeless and unstably housed populations. In 2023, American Indian or Alaska Natives make up 1.2% of the population in Island County but made up 8.6% of the homeless population. Also very concerning is that these households only made up 2.24% of the people accessing services. This is outlined in the chart below.



Source: US Census Bureau, Washington State Department of Commerce Snapshot on Homelessness and HMIS data

Since the pandemic, Island County has worked to build stronger relationships with programs serving vulnerable communities to try and provide equity and access to services. Washington State Department of Commerce has also created a tool for counties and providers to track households by race, age and gender to determine whether there is equity in positive outcomes from

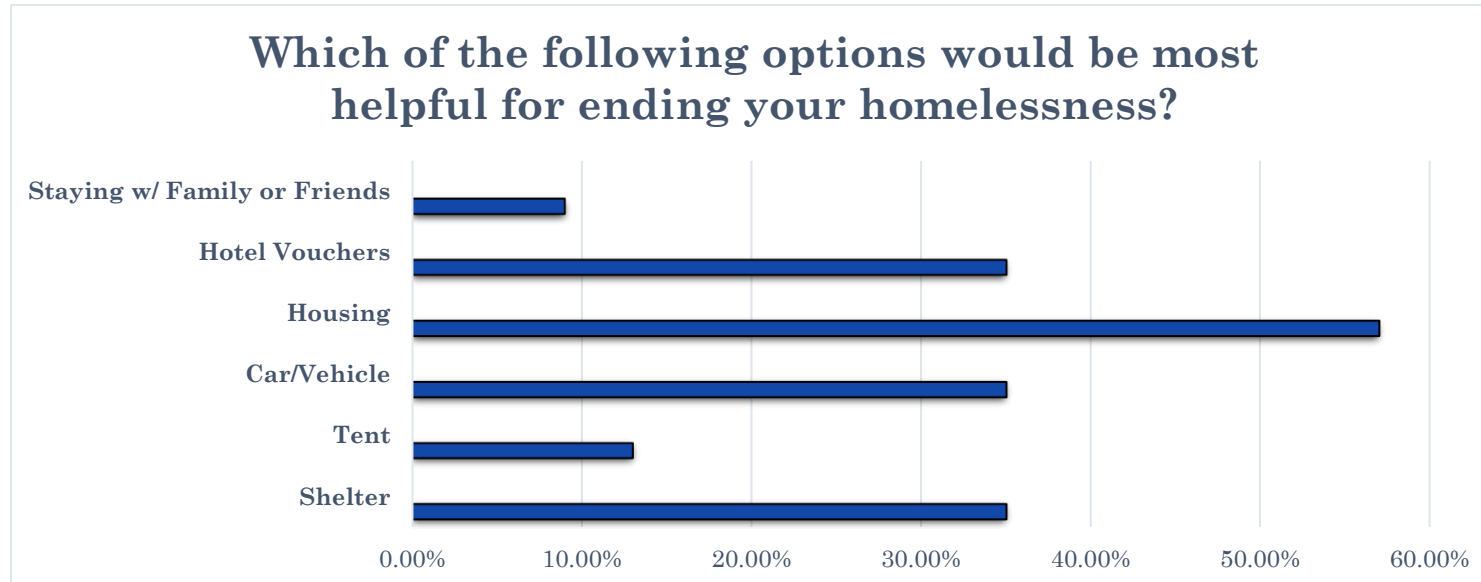
these programs. So not only do we want to see accessibility increase, but we also want to see positive exit outcomes from these programs for all populations.

### Lived Survey Results

The Homeless Housing Task Force agreed that distributing an anonymous survey through homeless housing and support service providers would be the most effective way at gathering information from people with current lived experience with homelessness. Each participant was provided with a \$20 visa gift card for completing the 10–15-minute survey.

### Summary of Results

The homeless housing survey gathered information from 23 households experiencing homelessness to better understand housing needs, barriers to stable housing, and access to services. The results highlighted gaps in affordable housing, economic stability and transportation. These findings will inform local planning efforts and guide resource allocation to improve housing stability in Island County. A summary of survey results follows.



### **Other Key Findings from Lived Survey**

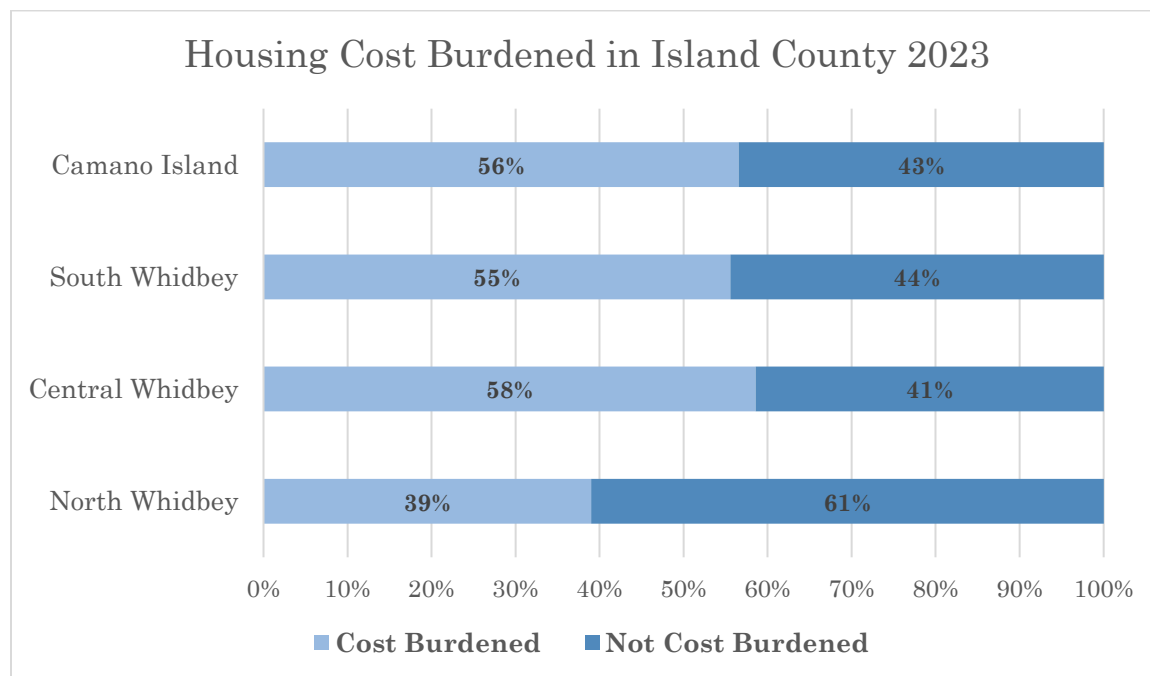
- 70% of respondents said that “staff at a program they use” was helping the most right now.
- 50%-75% of respondents said that medical care, dental care and emotional support were the most needed health supports
- When asked “what makes it hard for you to find or keep stable housing,” 73% of respondents responded with not enough affordable housing and no income or not enough income.
- 45% reported a lack of transportation being a barrier to finding or keeping stable housing.
- 68% of the respondents are looking for work currently and 23% are working part-time
- When asked what services are needed in Island County that are not currently available, the highest response was money for gas

### **Current Affordable Housing Market**

Over the past 3 years, we have seen an increasingly expensive rental housing market. Since the pandemic ended and the eviction moratorium ended, we have seen rents increase steadily, deposits increase as a result of these higher rents and growing demand for affordable rentals. This in turn has led to more households being cost burdened. HUD defines cost burdened as paying more than 30 percent of a household’s income to rent. Households paying over 50 percent of their income to rent are considered severely cost burdened.

This burden is being felt throughout the United States. In a recent report titled Deteriorating Rental Affordability, An Update on America’s Rental Housing 2024 it was reported that in recent years there has been “worsening affordability challenges for renters at every level of household income...” In addition, this report found that 83 percent of renters earning under \$30,000 were cost burdened in 2023, and 67 percent were severely cost burdened.

Here in Island County, the number of households who are cost burdened has jumped from about 35 percent of households to 52 percent of households over the last 10 years. On Camano Island and in Central and South Whidbey there has also been an increase in severely cost burdened households. The chart below captures these figures.



Source: US Census Bureau 2023 ACS 5 Year Estimate

Island County residents are struggling with rents and the high cost of living. Finding employment with a livable wage is becoming increasingly difficult. Even affordable housing projects based on a growing area median income rate are becoming out of reach for many households. In 2025, the AMI for a family of four in Island County was \$112,300 according to HUD Income Limits Documentation System. This translates to an affordable rent of \$2,807 a month for the average family of four in Island County.

Fair Market Rents are also increasing. The Fair Market Rent rate is set by HUD and should reflect a modest, non-substandard rental including utilities. This rate helps to determine a limit on what a household receiving a Housing Choice Voucher should pay. In 2025, the Fair Market rent for a 3 bedroom in Island County is \$2,242. For a single parent, they would need to earn \$43.11 an hour to afford a “modest” rental. And even at this rate, families are having a hard time finding rentals within this range to utilize their vouchers. The chart below illustrates HUD’s current fair market rent and how that translates into a livable wage.

| Unit Size         | 2025 Fair Market Rent | Annual Income Needed | Hourly Wage Needed | Island County Minimum Wage |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Efficiency/Studio | \$1178                | \$47,120             | \$22.65            | \$17.13                    |
| 1 Bedroom         | \$1317                | \$52,680             | \$25.32            | \$17.13                    |
| 2 Bedroom         | \$1600                | \$64,000             | \$30.77            | \$17.13                    |
| 3 Bedroom         | \$2242                | \$89,680             | \$43.11            | \$17.13                    |

## Estimates of Permanent and Emergency Housing Needs for Island County

Island County is currently updating their Comprehensive Plan including the Housing Element. The Housing Element examines the current housing data and projects the housing needs for the Island County community over the next 20 years. In conjunction with the Island County Planning Department, housing needs have been projected over the next 20 years including Emergency Shelter, Permanent Supportive Housing and Housing based on Affordability Level based on the Area Median Income (AMI). The tool provided by the Washington State Department of Commerce that is used to create these projections is The Housing All Planning Tool (HAPT). Below you can see the projections that the HAPT created for Island County based on a projected medium population growth.

**Table 1: OFM GMA Population Projections, 2045**

**Island County Projected Population, 2045**

|                             | Low    | Medium  | High    |
|-----------------------------|--------|---------|---------|
| Projected Population (2045) | 83,501 | 102,639 | 116,450 |

**Table 2: Projected Countywide Housing Needs Based on User Inputs**

**Island County**

Population Target = 102,639

Affordability Level (% of Area Median Income)

|                                      | Total  | 0-30%   |     | 30-50% | 50-80% | 80-100% | 100-120% | 120%+  | Emergency Housing/Shelter Beds |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---------|-----|--------|--------|---------|----------|--------|--------------------------------|
|                                      |        | Non-PSH | PSH |        |        |         |          |        |                                |
| Total Future Housing Needed (2045)** | 45,989 | 2,196   | 856 | 4,690  | 8,991  | 6,595   | 5,417    | 17,244 | 381                            |
| Estimated Housing Supply (2020)*     | 37,272 | 1,210   | 18  | 2,915  | 7,479  | 5,878   | 4,734    | 15,038 | 116                            |
| Net New Housing Needed (2020-2045)   | 8,717  | 986     | 838 | 1,775  | 1,512  | 717     | 683      | 2,206  | 265                            |

\* 2020 supply excludes homes in recreational use. Supply of PSH in 2020 is beds. However, projections of Net New Housing Needed (2020-2045) are in housing units. See Overview tab for details.

\*\* Total Future Housing Needed (2045) excludes 2020 homes in recreational use.

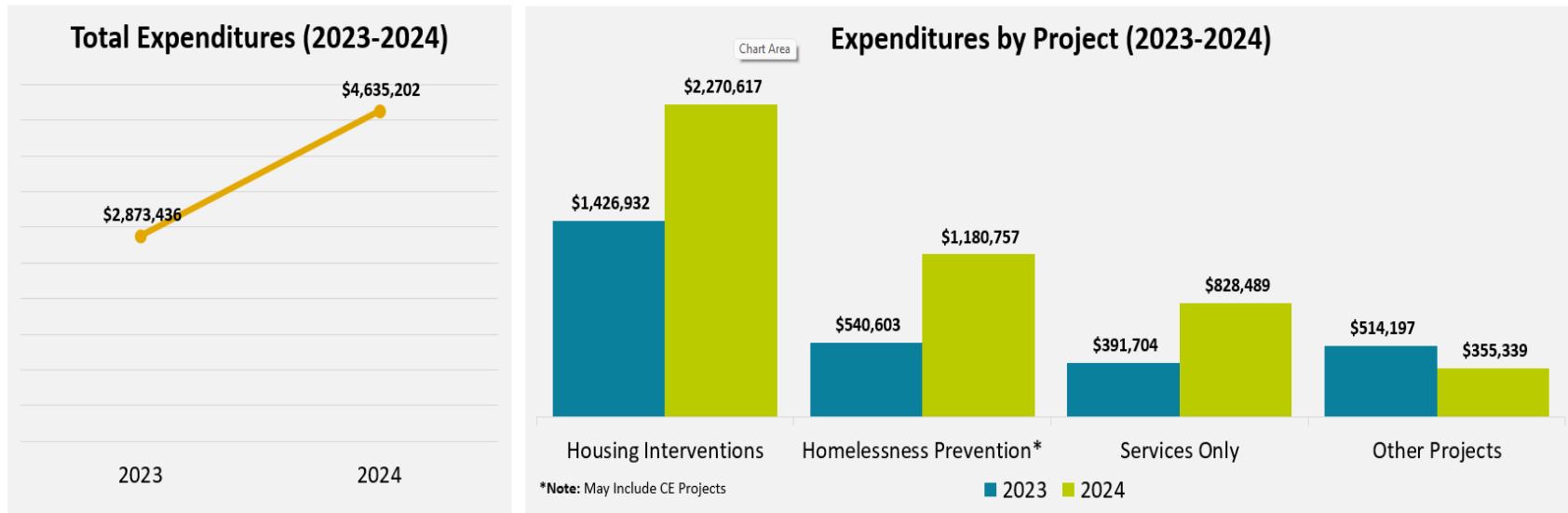
And with this tool, Island County is projecting to need an additional 265 Emergency Housing and Shelter beds over the next 20 years. That means that for the 2025-2030 Homeless Housing Plan, 66 new Emergency Housing and Shelter beds will need to be created to stay on pace. For Permanent Supportive Housing, 214 units will need to be created by 2030 to reach the goal of 856 new Permanent Supportive Housing units by 2045.

## Estimates of Service Levels

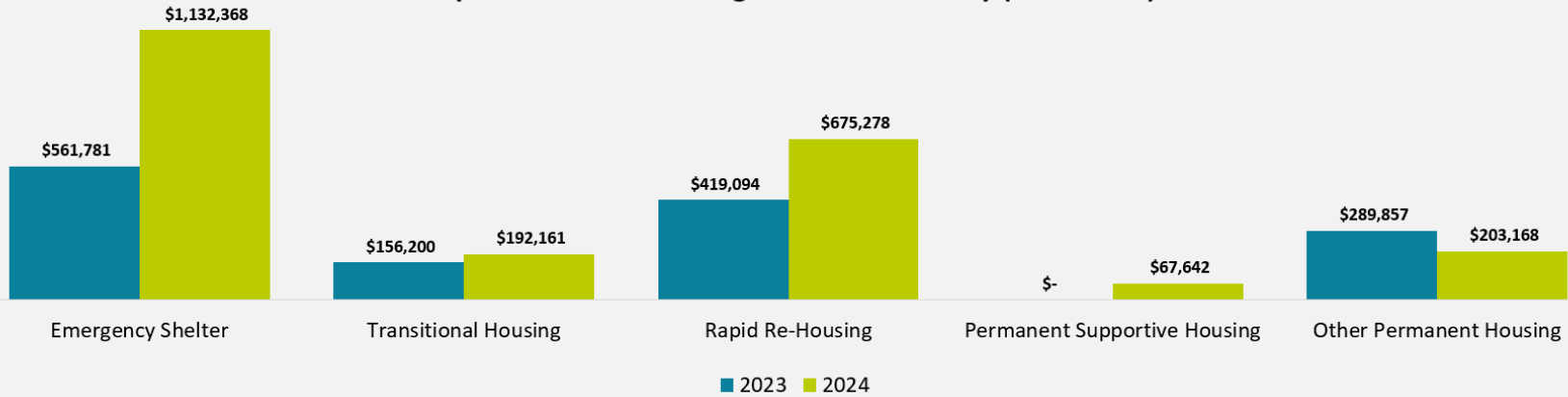
Washington State Department of Commerce has created a new dashboard, Estimates of Service Levels Data Tool, in preparation for these 5 Year Plans. This tool takes the annual data provided by each County in the Annual Expenditure Report and breaks down the data to funding sources and types of homeless housing projects in each county. The funding sources include Local, State and Federal Sources. The homeless housing projects include housing interventions, homelessness prevention, Services Only and Other. These are further defined below:

- Housing Interventions: Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Rapid Re-Housing (RRH), Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), and other permanent housing models (e.g., PSH that does not require a disability for entry).
- Homelessness Prevention: Programs that provide services or financial assistance to prevent a household from experiencing homelessness (e.g. Eviction Prevention rental assistance)
- Services Only: Coordinated Entry, services-only projects, street outreach, and day shelters

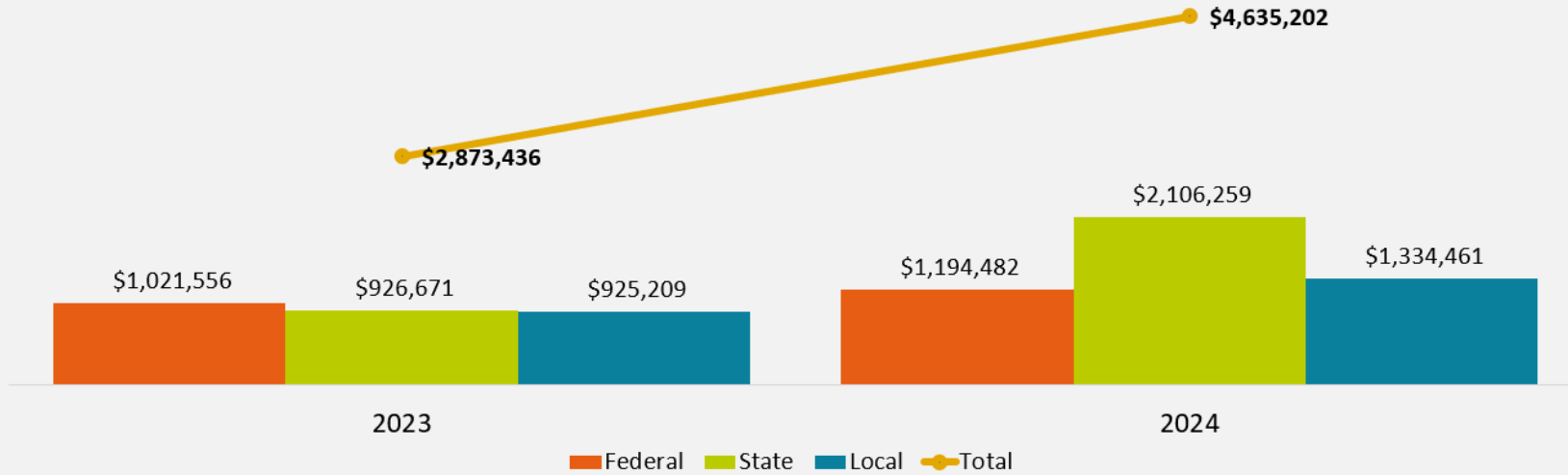
This allows counties to see where their funding is coming from, what projects it is being used for and how this trends from year to year. Please see the Estimates of Service Levels for Island County below from screenshots from the Estimates of Service Level Data Tool below:



**Expenditures on Housing Interventions Only (2023-2024)**



**Annual Expenditures By Funding Source (2023-2024)**



## Survey of Fund Sources for Homeless Housing Assistance Programs and Capital Projects

| Fund Source   | Source                  | Status               | Allowable Uses         | Amount Received SFY24 | Amount Received SFY25 |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Document Recording Surcharge, Local Portion                                     | Local                   | Receiving/Collecting | Operations             | \$434,193             | \$475,629             |
| Document Recording Surcharge, Affordable Housing Funds                          | Local                   | Receiving/Collecting | Operations and Capital | \$ 79,445             | \$ 88,234             |
| Mental Health Sales and Use Tax (1/10 of 1%)                                    | Local Sales Tax         | Receiving/Collecting | Operations             | \$1,976,347           | \$1,890,974           |
| Housing and Related Services Sales and Use Tax (HB 1590)                        | Local Sales Tax         | Receiving/Collecting | Operations and Capital | \$1,952,974           | \$2,160,545           |
| Consolidated Homeless Grant including Housing and Essential Needs (CHG and HEN) | State Grant             | Receiving/Collecting | Operations             | \$1,821,703           | \$2,089,388           |
| Criminal Justice Treatment Account  | State Grant             | Receiving/Collecting | Operations             | \$70,808              | \$120,413             |
| HB 1406   | State tax reimbursement | Receiving/Collecting | Operations and Capital | \$146,440             | \$146,440             |

| <b>Fund Source</b>  | <b>Source</b> | <b>Status</b>        | <b>Allowable Uses</b>  | <b>Amount Received SFY24</b> | <b>Amount Received SFY25</b> |
|---|---------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| HARPS   | State Grant   |                      |                        | \$27,517                     | \$11,446                     |
| CDBG – Mortgage and Rental Assistances  | Federal Grant | Receiving/Collecting | Operations and Capital | \$103,059                    | \$166,795                    |
| Community Behavioral Health Rental Assistance (CBRA)<br><i>Pioneer Human Svcs.</i>                      | State Grant   | Receiving/Collecting | Operations             | \$140,182                    | \$140,182                    |
| Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)<br><i>Opportunity Council</i>                           | Federal Grant | Receiving/Collecting | Operations             | \$232,593                    | \$355,280                    |
| Housing Choice Vouchers including Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)<br><i>Housing Authority</i> | Federal Grant | Receiving/Collecting | Operations             | \$2,419,945                  | \$2,530,021                  |
| Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV)<br><i>Housing Authority</i>  | Federal Grant | Receiving/Collecting | Operations             | \$184,202                    | \$229,767                    |
| HOST<br><i>Evergreen Recovery</i>   | State Grant   | Receiving/Collecting | Operations             | \$0                          | \$200,000                    |

| Fund Sources         | Source        | Status               | Allowable Uses         | Amount Received SFY24 | Amount Received SFY25 |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| TBRA – Skagit Home   | State/Federal | Receiving/Collecting | Operations             | \$122,800             | \$72,293              |
| Local Housing Levies | Local         | Not Eligible         | Operations and Capital | N/A                   | N/A                   |

### **Prioritization Criteria of Homeless Housing Capital Projects**

Before the tax for House Bill 1590 Funds was passed in Island County, our Board of County Commissioners requested a plan for how to best utilize this funding. The Island County 1590 Report and Revenue Distribution Plan for Affordable Housing and Related Services has become a guiding document for Capital Projects in Island County. This document lays out Goals and Strategies for this funding and makes recommendations for utilization of other affordable housing funds available to Island County. The following goals are included in this plan:

**Goal #1: Support greater housing growth and diversity of housing types for households with incomes at 60% Area Median Income and below.**

**Goal #2: Ensure affordability in perpetuity of new affordable housing units and monitor the preservation of existing subsidized housing stock at risk of being sold without any further use restrictions.**

**Goal #3: Ensure equitable distribution of affordable housing across Whidbey and Camano Islands. Prioritize projects near transit facilities, supportive services and job centers.**

**Goal #4: Track progress and support ongoing collaboration between all jurisdictions.**

Since the adoption of HB 1590, a rolling application for both HB 1590 funds and HB 1406 funds is now available on the Island County website. This application scoring process awards points for the number of units at 60% AMI and below, project location in relation to essential services and on-site services in alignment with the target population. Points are also awarded for targeting high-priority populations including:

1. Veterans
2. Senior residents
3. Individuals with disabilities
4. Domestic Violence survivors
5. Persons with behavioral health challenges
6. Persons at risk of becoming unhoused, currently unhoused, including families with children.
7. Unaccompanied unhoused youth or young adults

## **Island County Homeless Housing Objective and Action Plan**

The 2024-2029 Washington State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan contained 5 Objectives that each community needed to adopt locally and tailor to their local plans. These objectives provide goals for both Washington State and Island County to better guide the homeless crisis response system. The Objectives are as follows:

- ❖ **Objective 1: Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system**
  - Strengthen the crisis response system to ensure that it is accessible to all
  - Work with By and For organizations to create a checks and balances to ensure that equity and accountability are being met consistently
  - Empower our providers to be accountable to all communities and utilize tools provided to examine their outcomes

- ❖ Objective 2: Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce
  - Ensure that clients are receiving best practice whenever and wherever they are accessing services
  - Decrease burnout in the homeless service provider workforce by increasing training
  - Advocate for more funding to increase pay and capacity in programs
- ❖ Objective 3: Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible
  - With the lack of affordable housing available, keeping people housed has become an even larger priority
  - Utilize funding and vulnerability tools to prevent evictions whenever possible
  - Strengthen follow up case management to ensure that those who secure housing, can maintain this housing
- ❖ Objective 4: Prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm
  - Increase emergency shelter options for extreme weather events to serve the most vulnerable
  - Identify housing gaps in our current system and create pathways to provide a more robust list of housing options
  - Strengthen relationships with existing systems like Public Health to create referral pathways for providers that serve our vulnerable populations
- ❖ Objective 5: Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs
  - Actively work to break down silos between county and city government
  - Partner to create more emergency housing and affordable housing opportunities that best meet the needs of our community
  - Identify current barriers and prioritize programs that reduce those barriers

The Homeless Housing Task Force adopted these 5 Objectives to inform and guide the 5 Year Homeless Housing Plan for Island County. The Task Force agreed that they wanted an action plan with attainable, clear and equitable goals. There are many things that could be done to impact homelessness that are outside of this plan. They would require systemic changes and increased funding. It was important to this task force to focus on goals that can be worked towards within the current system constraints and funding available. The Objectives and Action Plan are as follows:

**Objective 1: Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system**

| Action   | Measure  | Timeline                                     | Action Takers   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p><b>1.1</b> Re-engage Coordinated Entry oversight committee and create goals for this committee on increasing equity across Island County</p>                                      | <p>Increase accountability for Coordinated Entry system</p>  | <p>2026 Quarter 2</p>                        | <p>Housing Program Manager and Island County Homeless Housing and Service Providers</p> |
| <p><b>1.2</b> Run quarterly reports on equitable outcomes and share with providers</p>   | <p>Keep providers informed on outcomes so they can continue to strengthen outcomes</p>                 | <p>2026 Quarter 2 and on-going quarterly</p> | <p>Housing Program Manager and Island County Homeless Housing and Service Providers</p> |
| <p><b>1.3</b> Facilitate annual meetings with Commerce and homeless services providers to discuss improving outcomes and distribute all applicable data appoints before meetings</p> | <p>Increase communication between Commerce and sub-grantees to ensure access to all tools</p>          | <p>2026 Quarter 3 and on-going annually</p>  | <p>Island County, WA State Dept of Commerce, Homeless Housing and Service Providers</p> |
| <p><b>1,4</b> Strengthen communication with By and For organizations in community and invite open and honest feedback around equity and accessibility in Island County</p>           | <p>Pair data with real life experiences to get full picture and improve accessibility and outcomes</p> | <p>2026 Quarter 4 and on-going</p>           | <p>Island County Housing Support Center</p>   |

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| <p><b>1.5</b> Promote capacity building opportunities for smaller organizations by communicating and encouraging training and funding opportunities with the Whidbey Community Foundation</p> | <p>Strengthen our local community organizations to make them efficient and prepared</p> | <p>2027 and on-going</p> | <p>Island County, Homeless Housing and Service Providers</p> |
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**Objective 2: Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce**

| <b>Action</b>   | <b>Measure</b>  | <b>Timeline</b>                             | <b>Action Takers</b>  |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>2.1</b> Increase capacity for trainings for direct service providers by collaborating on trainings, increase communication among agencies, share costs to bring trainers to Island County</p> | <p>Training availability and quality will go up leading to stronger service delivery and less burnout</p>               | <p>2026 Quarter 4 and on-going</p>          | <p>Island County will gather trainings from Public Health, Commerce, Schools, Behavioral Health</p> |
| <p><b>2.2</b> Establish local standards of best practice in case management and direct service to strengthen and streamline service delivery</p>  | <p>Standards will be shared and agreed upon across organizations so that people receive consistent service delivery</p> | <p>2027-2028 with on-going annual input</p> | <p>Island County Homeless Housing and Service Providers</p>   |

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| <p><b>2.3</b> Advocate to Commerce to increase inflation funds and apply those funds for livable wages to homeless housing workforce</p>   | <p>Wages will increase for homeless housing workforce</p> | <p>2026 – 2028, Quarter 1</p>      | <p>Island County, Homeless Housing and Service Providers</p> |
| <p><b>2.4</b> Advocate to legislatures to re-examine Area Median Income (AMI) as effective tool to set affordable housing rates because as the income gap continues to grow, direct service providers are unable to afford “affordable” rent</p> | <p>Provide housing that is truly affordable to all</p>    | <p>2026-2028</p>                   | <p>Island County Leadership</p>                              |
| <p><b>2.5</b> Encourage agencies to provide job share opportunities in their hiring to support staff positions such as maintenance, food preparation, janitorial, etc. so that employees can receive full-time work</p>                          | <p>Increase employment opportunities in community</p>     | <p>2026 Quarter 2 and on-going</p> | <p>Coordinated Entry Oversight Committee, Island County</p>  |

### Objective 3: Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible

| Action  | Measure   | Timeline                           | Action Takers  |
|---|---|------------------------------------|--|
| <p><b>3.1</b> Advocate for Commerce to increase flexible funding that includes paying rent proactively to increase chances of lease renewal, provide for landlord incentives to encourage renting to young adults, households with bad credit, etc.</p> | <p>Strengthen tenant and landlord relationships so more households remain stably housed long term</p> | <p>2027 Quarter 1 and on-going</p> | <p>Island County Human Services, Local Landlords and Property Managers, Housing Authority of Island County</p> |
| <p><b>3.2</b> Increase life skills and case management supports for households who are newly housed to assist with their continuing stabilization by providing more wrap around services and Permanent Supportive Housing</p>                           | <p>Decrease evictions and loss of housing within vulnerable communities</p>                           | <p>2026 Quarter 2 and on-going</p> | <p>Homeless Housing and Service Providers, Island County Human Services</p>                                    |
| <p><b>3.3</b> Strengthen case management in the area of resources for debt consolidation and financial assistance to improve their credit including reaching out to local banks and credit unions for resources</p>                                     | <p>Assist households with increasing credit scores and decreasing evictions</p>                       | <p>2027 and on-going</p>           | <p>Homeless Housing and Service Providers, Island County Housing Support Center</p>                            |

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| <b>3.4</b> Prioritize prevention services for those who are most vulnerable to losing their housing and consider long term assistance versus crisis response when needed.   | Serve households in crisis in addition to those experiencing on-going high vulnerability | 2026 and on-going | Island County Housing Support Center, WA State Department of Commerce                   |
| <b>3.5</b> Partner with Senior Service Providers in Island County to establish housing needs in this population and include in funding priorities.                          | Increase referrals and prevent seniors from experiencing homelessness                    | 2026 and on-going | Island County Human Services, Island Senior Resources, The Center, Local Municipalities |
| <b>3.6</b> Assist agencies in partnering with organizations to access grant writing support and exploring funding outside of HUD and traditional government funding sources | Diversity Homeless Housing and Service Providers income streams                          | 2027 and on-going | Homeless Housing and Service Providers, Community Foundations                           |

**Objective 4: Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and greatest risk of harm**

| <b>Action</b>  | <b>Measure</b>   | <b>Timeline</b>           | <b>Action Takers</b>  |
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| <b>4.1a</b> Collaborate with Island County Emergency Management to provide cold weather shelter options in Island County, develop consistent process for activation and communicate that protocol. | Provide cold weather shelter options so they are more accessible for all Island County residents | 2027 Quarter 1, Quarter 4 | Island County, Homeless Service Providers, Emergency Management |

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| <p><b>4.1b</b> Assess need and integration of shelter options into emergency protocol for wildfire smoke incidents and cooling centers during extreme summer weather events</p>  | <p>Establish need and protocol for emergency shelters to address wildfire smoke and extreme heat events</p> | <p>2026 Quarter 3 and 4, 2027</p>  | <p>Island County Human Services, Emergency Management and Public Health, Homeless Service Providers</p>                            |
| <p><b>4.2</b> Strengthen vulnerability form and/or utilize vulnerability form that WA State Dept of Commerce is developing to improved prioritization</p>  | <p>Improve prioritization to ensure most vulnerable are being served</p>                                    | <p>2026 - 2027</p>                 | <p>Island County Housing Support Center, WA State Department of Commerce</p>   |
| <p><b>4.3</b> Develop stronger partnerships with agencies serving our most vulnerable communities including BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth to increase accessibility</p>   | <p>More households from vulnerable communities will have equitable access to services and assistance.</p>   | <p>2026-2030</p>                   | <p>Island County Housing Support Center, By and For Organizations, Community Providers, Homeless Housing and Service Providers</p> |
| <p><b>4.4</b> Engage more frequently with people accessing services to understand their barriers and continue this conversation as their barriers change depending on where they are at in the crisis response system and include anonymous options.</p> | <p>Incorporate feedback to improve crisis response system</p>   | <p>2026 Quarter 4 and on-going</p> | <p>Island County Homeless Housing and Service Providers, Island County Housing Support Center</p>                                  |

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| <p><b>4.5</b> Identify housing gaps such as respite care from hospital, group homes, shared housing and collaborate with providers of these services in other counties to incorporate into Island County</p> | <p>Increase housing options for households that do not fit into current system options</p>   | <p>2027-2030</p>  | <p>Island County, Local Municipalities, Whidbey Health, Island Senior Resources</p>           |
| <p><b>4.6a</b> Create referral pathway between Outreach Providers and Public Health for environmental health concerns when encountering sites without sanitary facilities</p>                                | <p>Increase communication and ability to take action when Homeless Service Providers and Public Health encounter people needing support around housing, health and hygiene</p> | <p>2027-20230</p> | <p>Island County Human Services and Public Health, Homeless Housing and Service Providers</p> |
| <p><b>4.6b</b> Discuss protocol for mobile WASH (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene) units and the level of public health needs that would require these tools and how they would be provided</p>                    | <p>Increase public health safety</p>   | <p>2027-2030</p>  | <p>Island County Public Health, Human Services and Homeless Housing and Service Providers</p> |

**Objective 5: Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs.**

| Action  | Measure   | Timeline                                | Action Takers   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>5.1</b> Partner with the City governments in prioritizing land and funding for increased emergency shelter options to meet the needs of local Comprehensive Plans</p>   | <p>Increase types of Emergency Shelter available</p>                                    | <p>2026 Second Quarter and on-going</p> | <p>Island County, City of Oak Harbor, City of Coupeville, City of Langley</p> |
| <p><b>5.2</b> Advocate with city and county planners for less restrictive zoning to allow for emergency shelter options throughout the county with increased density</p>  | <p>Increase Emergency Shelter options throughout Island County</p>                      | <p>2026 First Quarter and on-going</p>  | <p>Island County Housing, Island County Planners, City Planners</p>           |
| <p><b>5.3</b> Affordable Housing Specialist will continue to seek out properties that have high density potential for Island County to buy and release an RFQ for affordable housing and prioritizing funding for plans serving 0-30% AMI</p> | <p>Increase Affordable Housing with funding priority for projects serving 0-30% AMI</p> | <p>On-going</p>                         | <p>Affordable Housing Specialist, Housing Program Manager, Island County</p>  |
| <p><b>5.4</b> Affordable Housing Specialist, Island County Planners and Housing Program Manager will collaborate on potential land for emergency shelter in Island County</p>   | <p>Increase Emergency Shelter</p>   | <p>2026 First Quarter and on-going</p>  | <p>Affordable Housing Specialist and Housing Case Manager</p>                 |

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| <b>5.5</b> Meet with Whidbey Health Medical Center to discuss medical respite needs and potential partnerships to provide this resource   | Provide medical respite options for unhoused people   | 2027 and on-going                | Island County Human Services, Whidbey Health Medical Center   |
| <b>5.6</b> Increase communication with Stanwood Housing Providers to explore potential Camano Island partnerships   | Increase Emergency Shelter and Affordable Housing options on Camano   | 2026 Second Quarter and on-going | Island County, Camano Housing, Snohomish County, Community Resource Center of Stanwood Camano       |
| <b>5.7</b> Prioritize funding for shelter and affordable housing projects that includes seniors in their prioritization population  | Increase housing options for seniors and strengthen their ability to secure housing                         | 2026 Second Quarter and on-going | Island County, Housing Developers, Senior Service Providers, Homeless Housing and Service Providers |
| <b>5.8</b> Advocate for legislatures to provide funding and resources for aging chronically homeless population that includes flexibility with high needs around behavioral health, substance abuse and medical needs   | Decrease homelessness amongst seniors who are unable to stabilize in traditional assisted living facilities | 2027-2030 First Quarters         | Island County Leadership, Homeless Housing and Service Providers                                    |
| <b>5.9</b> Elevate the need for emergency housing options that include households with pets by providing resources to current providers and encouraging this inclusion for new emergency shelter options moving forward | Decrease the barriers of seeking emergency housing for households with a pet                                | 2026 Second Quarter and on-going | Island County, Homeless Housing and Service Providers   |

## Next Steps

### Notice of Public Hearing

As outlined in the Washington State Department of Commerce 2025-2030 Local Homeless Housing Plan Guidance, a notice of public hearing was published 30 days prior to the anticipated approval of the final plan. The date for this public hearing with the Island County Board of County Commissioners is expected on April 14, 2026 where the plan is anticipated to be adopted. The notice will be available through the following:

- Whidbey News Times on March 14, 2026
- Island County Washington website at islandcountywa.gov on March 13, 2026
- Island County Public Health Instagram and Facebook on March 13, 2026
- Emailed to: Homeless Housing and Service Providers, Homeless Housing Task Force and the Housing Provider Network with messages to forward on to their distribution groups

### Enactment and Follow-up Reviews and Reports

Once adopted, this plan will be guiding next steps in improving the homeless crisis response system. Island County Human Services will create a calendar of action steps to continue collaborating with partners and setting goals to make progress on this plan. Priority will be given to inviting and strengthening partnerships that have been identified in this plan to improve communication and collaboration between providers serving our most vulnerable community members in addition to the timelines outlined in this plan.

As per RCW 43.185C.045(3), Island County will be responsible for annually reporting updates to Washington State Department of Commerce on the status of the Island County 5 Year Homeless Housing Plan 2025-2030. This includes any updates, progress on goals and changes needed to the plan.