



February 15, 2023

Marc Dones
King County Regional Homelessness Authority
400 Yesler Way
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mx. Dones,

The City of Kirkland is deeply appreciative of the hard work KCRHA has invested in creating a comprehensive document that guides how we address homelessness as a unified region, using an approach that is person-centered, data driven, and committed to justice. The City appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the draft Five Year Plan.

Kirkland and neighboring Eastside cities have worked for decades to streamline how we approach homelessness through coordination and funding to help meet the needs of unhoused community members. Despite the coordination of resources, the Eastside is unable to address the need in its entirety. Eastside subarea voice is critical in shaping KCRHA's mission to create a unified homeless response system across King County, with input into the 5-year Plan and the Eastside Subregional Plan.

City staff have reviewed the Plan to provide comments reflective of the Eastside landscape, recognizing the final Five-Year Plan will subsequently inform efforts in development of the Eastside sub-regional plan in partnership with KCRHA, neighboring Eastside cities, and service providers.

Commitment to Equity

The City applauds the anti-racist lens applied and demonstrated throughout the plan; it is a necessary and direct response to the disproportionality of people of color who experience homelessness in King County.

We are supportive of the prioritization of centering those with lived experience guiding the work and development of the plan through community engagement, data access, and shaping future investment recommendations by the Authority.

We support Goal 4, 5, and 6 in the plan, including:

- Recognition that Black and African Americans, Native Americans, and Indigenous communities are overrepresented and face disproportionate barriers to receiving appropriate and relevant services and care within the current system; subsequently the commitment to diversify providers in the homeless response system;
- Ending homelessness for families with children experiencing homelessness in King County;
- And addressing the unique challenges of youth homelessness and the disproportional impacts homelessness has on a young resident and the risk of future housing instability.

Congregate Shelter and Emergency Housing

The City supports the shift to non-congregate shelter efforts and focusing on emergency housing using the Housing First model. We applaud how the Authority incorporated feedback from users of the system in recommending this shift. The City would like to see additional clarity on the timeline of this transition, and if congregate shelters would remain competitive for funding as the model is phased out.

The Eastside is not seeing a decrease in demand for congregate shelter compared to other subregions. Additional temporary housing models would need to come online to address existing need as congregate shelter is phased out. The Plan needs specific strategies for how this shift happens. Additional clarification is needed around the Plan's recommended decrease in modular homes County-wide, and how the recommended shift ties into the phasing from congregate to non-congregate shelter. Closing congregate shelters without alternatives available will only exacerbate homelessness.

Strengthening Coordination of Systems

The City supports the Authority's role to engage and work alongside parallel systems (e.g. housing, health care, child welfare, education, employment, incarceration) for better outcomes for families, youth, people of color, high acuity individuals, and other identified subpopulations. As part of the subregional plans, we would like to see the Authority identify paths to alignment to increase efficiency across systems and how they work together in responding to the needs of unhoused community members. The City has observed this with the leadership coordinating severe weather response and looks forward to future alignment of efforts and systems to improve efficiency and minimize harm to unhoused residents.

Severe Weather Response

The City is highly supportive of KCRHA's role coordinating regional response to severe weather events. The City has been very impressed by the leadership and resources made available by the Authority over the last year to support unhoused residents, staff, municipalities, and partners to work together on a unified response during severe weather events.

Real-Time Availability

The City supports KCRHA's role to understand the hundreds of programs offered and subsequent criteria County-wide to produce real-time availability of appropriate services for a household in need of shelter.

Coordinated Entry

We applaud the Authority's commitment to improve coordinated entry with a renewed focus on equity, transparency, consistency, and efficiency to appropriately match a user's needs. We are interested to learn more about the specific strategies KCRHA plans to incorporate into its approach to strengthen coordinated entry.

Funding

We support the vision to streamline and coordinate funding for homelessness services across the region. The Eastside currently works as a collective to streamline and support Eastside shelter providers. We look forward to building on existing momentum with KCRHA.

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The estimated implementation costs outlined in the Plan far exceed current revenue streams. The City is interested in how the Authority will identify sustainable revenue sources in public and private funding to offset the proposed costs within the Plan. The cost to address homelessness in our region signals the result of a national crisis and requires substantial support. We are also interested in how the Authority plans to identify under-utilized resources and streamline where possible to redirect dollars to support services and operations more efficiently throughout the region as outlined in the 24-month action plan.

Use of Data

The City is supportive of the layered approach and integration of community qualitative approach in data collection methods to center those with lived experience. The shared methodology and use of HB 1220 data from the Department of Commerce is informative, but difficult to understand. There are significant gaps in how KCRHA is using the Cloudburst to inform the housing modeling and cost estimates outlined in the plan; and how the qualitative data is incorporated into the current recommendations.

We recognize the urgent situation our region is facing, and the importance of a streamlined and coordinated response that centers those with lived experience, as a region. The City looks forward to continuing our work with KCRHA in development of the East King County sub-regional plan. Thank you for your vision and commitment to supporting our unhoused neighbors in King County.

Sincerely,
CITY OF KIRKLAND



Kurt Triplett
City Manager

CC: KCRHA Implementation Board
KCRHA Governing Committee