



STUDY ON TRANSITION TO A DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

**Prepared for Office of Financial Management
Section 27(a), Chapter 376, Laws of 2024**

Acknowledgments

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The Athena Group is a for-purpose, women-owned consulting firm dedicated to taking whole-systems approaches and creating inclusive public policy.

Recommendations made by The Athena Group about how to design the final study are not an endorsement of any policy outcome.

Participants

The Athena Group is grateful to all of the individuals who participated in sharing their insights and expertise to support this work. Importantly, we acknowledge that this project was unable to include the full network of housing careholders and as such our recommendations reflect the need for a broader engagement plan to include all necessary perspectives for the final study. Further, not all of the organizations listed below were able to fully participate in our research and we greatly appreciate the time and responses that were provided despite time constraints.

Association of Washington Cities

Association of Washington Housing Authorities

Building Industry Association of Washington

Department of Children, Youth and Families

Department of Commerce

Department of Corrections

Department of Social and Health Services

Health Care Authority

King County Department of Community and Human Services

Low Income Housing Institute

Office of Equity

Office of Financial Management

Office of The Governor

Washington Low Income Housing Alliance

Washington State Housing Finance Commission

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Introduction

This report provides evidence-based recommendations to the Office of Financial Management, as directed by budget proviso Section 27(a), Chapter 376, Laws of 2024, about the method and format of studying a transition from various housing programs statewide to a single Department of Housing.

Recommendations for the final study provide essential information to support those who will lead this effort into the future with the aim of developing a credible and equitable approach, grounded in evidence, and reflective of the needs and priorities of Washington State’s housing ecosystem.

Housing policy leaders and careholders¹ have expressed an ongoing interest in studying the creation of a separate statewide housing entity to address a variety of policy goals.² A proviso in the 2024 Supplemental Operating Budget provided funding to create recommendations for a final study.³

“\$250,000 of the general fund-state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 is provided solely for the office of financial management to provide recommendations on the method and format for studying a transition to a department of housing. In developing the recommendations, previous efforts to establish new entities or programs should be considered, such as the office of equity task force, the social equity in cannabis task force, the blue ribbon commission on delivery of services to children and families, and methods used by other jurisdictions. The recommendations must include:

- Which entity should lead the study, such as an agency, a contractor, or a task force;
- Which entities should consult and collaborate on the study, such as legislators, agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses and local jurisdictions;
- Which programs across state agencies should be considered by the study for possible incorporation into a department of housing;
- What housing types and financing structures should be identified and considered by the study;
- What gaps and barriers to establishing a department of housing should be identified and considered by the study; and
- *An estimate of the costs and possible timeline for the recommended method and format of the study*⁴

¹The term “careholder” guides towards a sense of responsibility, empathy, and mutual concern among those involved, highlighting the importance of nurturing relationships, understanding needs, and prioritizing shared goals. It underscores the idea that effective and equitable collaboration requires caring for the welfare of all touched by the work through fostering trust and reciprocity.

² [House Bill 2270 \(2023\)](#) on Creating a Washington state department of housing.

³ [Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5950](#), Section 133 (27) a.

⁴ Although this recommendation was not part of The Athena Group’s contract, the topic of a study timeline was discussed with interviewees and is included in this report.

The recommendations are due to the governor and the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the legislature by December 1, 2024.”

The recommendations were thoughtfully co-created through a series of in-depth interviews with individuals representing diverse organizational affiliations, perspectives, and backgrounds who have first-hand knowledge, experience and expertise about Washington’s housing programs and dynamics. To ensure accuracy and mutual understanding, summary reports of interview findings were shared with participants, who had the opportunity to review and validate the information. This feedback loop is central to the approach, as it ensures that the emerging insights remain closely tied to participants’ lived experiences.

The direct words, insights, practical advice and collective wisdom that follows carries the weight of this effort. We hope readers will enjoy and appreciate these foundational and hard-won insights taken from decades of service and care as much as our team has enjoyed and been privileged to collect and share them during a pivotal moment in the history of our state and country.

This report offers [seven recommendations to study a transition of programs to a new department](#) that include details on roles, responsibilities, goals, design considerations and process steps. The recommendations are also listed below for easy reference.

Leadership, Format and Focus

1. The final study should be co-led by the Office of The Governor and the Office of Financial Management.
2. Hire an independent third-party or consultant to lead community engagement and co-lead the broader facilitation effort.
3. Create a subcabinet on housing outcomes of state, regional and local housing and anti-poverty program and community practitioners.
4. Include all housing and finance types and new innovative funding approaches as part of supply and demand-side analyses for different regions or rural, suburban, and urban areas within the state.

Consultation and Collaboration

5. Co-develop and implement an outreach and engagement plan based on the community and tribal engagement approach of the Office of Equity Task Force.
6. Include the full continuum of housing careholders in outreach and engagement efforts aligning with the phased approach, structure and needs of the work.

Program Decision Matrix

7. Evaluate and evolve initial program decision criteria following or in alignment with the work to co-create guiding values and principles.

Lessons learned from previous efforts

An important basis for creating recommendations is to learn from those who previously had instrumental roles in the creation of new departments. The below findings are based on insights shared by individuals who supported the Blue Ribbon Commission on the Delivery of Services to Children and Families, and the Office of Equity Task Force. These lessons learned are substantively incorporated into the final recommendations including the community and tribal engagement approach undertaken by the Office of Equity Task Force.

Invest in creating a meaningful process with successful outcomes for leadership, participants, and community

- Create a plan to intentionally and strategically support leadership that includes executive-level presence and endorsement of project goals
- Identify important leadership attributes and qualities such as - active listening, being measured in responding to conflict, managing expectations about what is possible, managing the psychological dynamics involved in addressing complex, contentious issues, embracing negative feedback and ambivalence to foster growth-oriented mindsets and a culture of building success based on the perspectives and solutions proposed by people directly involved in the process
- Embrace project strategies that – identify a shared starting point, include diverse perspectives, shift from a scarcity-based mindset to an abundance-based perspective, navigate processes within what is possible according to relevant statutes, legal opportunities and barriers, make time for ongoing conversations around formal meetings, develop decision-making processes that build consensus and move the project forward by building support, alignment and a sense of success among participants
- Create space for authentic community engagement where meetings are held in spaces that feel welcoming and empowering for participants
- Identify team members who have strong community relationships and credibility to be in community connector roles to build trust, ensure meaningful participation and facilitate ongoing accountability to the process and shared decision-making
- Over-communicate and promote information about community meetings across diverse communication channels
- Ensure the community ideation process has clear feedback loops so that input is honored and acted upon with the community's awareness

Focus on and invest heavily in relationship building early in the process including ongoing relationship management and communications with participants and affected parties

“I came to understand more about the intricate dynamics and resistance that can arise when attempting to create a more inclusive and collaborative community-oriented space within existing governmental structures.” – Person instrumental to establish a new state entity

- Survey or poll participants throughout the process, including as an early engagement strategy, to gauge existing and changing attitudes and beliefs
- Consider differences in comfort and experience levels in public meeting spaces
- Include alternative ways for people to participate, such as allowing input in writing without the need to speak publicly
- Account for power differentials between existing groups and community members to ensure all participants are heard and valued regardless of their position including any fears about a loss of power or position
- Identify key individuals who possess the knowledge, relationships, and ability to make needed adjustments such as deputies, assistants, or program managers

Establish clear foundational beliefs, a vision, and guiding principles to anchor the process and decision-making using evidence-based frameworks

“I would have given the initiative more time to develop.” – Person instrumental to establish a new state entity

- Large scale reform initiatives need adequate time and broad participation to co-develop foundational beliefs and guiding principles
- Perform substantive research that supports the creation of a holistic model to address underlying issues
- Create a shared vision and foundational beliefs to guide decision-making about which programs to include or exclude

Design processes that name and celebrate successes, liberate or give voice to ideas, and share the limelight

- Measure progress based on shared process outcomes to build and maintain momentum, interest and accountability amongst a wide range of participants
- Use a co-facilitation approach to support timely decisions
- Celebrate and communicate about small, measurable successes

- Foster greater understanding about the ideas of people in government to enhance or increase the great work already being done
- Focus on engaging the people who show up rather than waiting for perfect attendance or specific individuals
- Create ongoing opportunities for engagement and help people feel that their participation is valuable, even if there are absences or changes in attendance over time

Include funding needs alongside the policy discussion

“We made a strong case to the legislature for the need for additional funding to properly implement reforms, initially securing about half of the requested amount, with the full funding approved the following year.” – Person instrumental to establish a new state entity

- Support large-scale reform efforts by including both the policy rationale and financial needs upfront through a governor’s directive and request legislation
- Perform cost analyses for programs or agencies considered for inclusion, especially having adequate staff for administrative functions
- Consider multi-year funding strategies or phased approaches

Consider how oversight can best support the success of a new department.

- Establish an oversight committee to support the vision for alignment of programs and services on an ongoing basis
- Onboard an oversight committee before the establishment of a new entity so that members can provide guidance, feedback and support during implementation

Additionally, a number of other interviewees were instrumental in administering change that followed from large reorganizations or program transitions. These insights are also offered to inform lessons learned.

Ensure a thoughtful and gradual change management process that prioritizes staff wellbeing and a healthy organizational culture

“As someone who has gone through the experience of transitioning a division from one large state agency to another, I can say that while having full-time change management support is helpful, what truly makes a difference is listening to the people who are directly impacted by the change. They are the experts on their own business operations and can provide valuable insights on how to work together effectively.” – Program Administrator careholder

- Incorporate a change management perspective and plan that supports staff through transitions to avoid burnout

- Provide adequate transition time and resources to avoid service disruptions and to prioritize creating an inclusive and participatory work environment that addresses the needs and concerns of all staff
- Co-create an organizational development plan with staff that outlines values, goals and actions important to them
- Establish a racial equity team and conduct annual surveys focused on equity and racial equity

Existing regional and statewide recommendations

This section highlights current and highly relevant intersectional work and recommendations of existing work groups including foundational studies specific to Washington State that provide evidence-based policies and best practices to support the creation of equitable housing systems. This work is inclusive of a diversity of housing careholders named by interviewees and identified in our literature review for the purpose of including a broader range of perspectives and ensuring awareness for those who will lead this effort in the future.

The William D. Ruckelshaus Center. Pathways to Housing Security. Final Report of Facilitated Discussions and Recommendations (2023).

This report is part of a multiyear effort involving a wide range of participants in interviews and workshops per Section 6 of ESSHB 1277, including Tribal governments and Urban Indian Organizations, local governments, service providers, advocates, mental health and substance abuse professionals, business community members, legislators, executive branch and gubernatorial appointments, and incorporates focus group work that was done in parallel among those living without a house.

The report identifies trends and policies that guide the housing and services provided to persons at risk of homelessness, develops options, and provides 18 recommendations for a long-term strategy and implementation steps to improve services and outcomes for persons at risk of experiencing homelessness including developing pathways to permanent housing solutions. Notable highlights include:

- Recommendation 6 provides examples of how to facilitate equitable access to housing for those transitioning from homelessness and most at risk of housing instability noting that designing facilitated access for historically marginalized groups will likely create greater access for all those in need. Conversely, designing approaches based on circumstances of the majority can perpetuate current inequities and exclusion.
- Recommendation 11 provides person-centered improvements to reduce silos along the housing continuum
- A graphic overview of the investment landscape and overview of recent state government initiatives and regional coordination efforts⁵
- A key insight that describes the fragmentation of success, or what “counts” as success differs across levels of government and service sectors when what contributes to success varies for different populations and in different service-delivery contexts. Participant discussions made

⁵ See [Appendix A](#).

clear that addressing related goals or intersections (economic stability and growth, income wealth inequality, climate change) can create opportunities to reinforce housing security goals

Additional state and regional coordination groups named by the Ruckelshaus Study apart from what is provided herein include:

- Balance of Washington State Continuum of Care Steering Committee
- Statewide Reentry Council
- Interagency Workgroup of Youth Homelessness

Environmental Justice Council

In support of the proposal to fund Infrastructure and Land Reacquisition for Tribal Climate Adaptation and Mitigation in the 2025-2027 Biennial Budget Recommendations, the Environmental Justice Council cited a 2024 report by the Northwest Climate Resilience Collaborative finding that “persistent funding barriers limit coastal Tribes’ ability to address climate risks, including insufficient funding, rigid rules and qualification criteria, short-term funding cycles, and misalignment between existing funds and Tribal priorities.”⁶ The EJ Council’s funding proposal was previously submitted for consideration in the 2024 supplemental budget and was not funded.

The report explains that the lack of adequate staff to address climate adaptation priorities is due to “short-term grant funding that drives high staff turnover... and chronic housing shortages that limit staff recruitment and retention.”⁷

“There’s simply no housing available. We have had several people we’ve offered jobs to end up backing out because they can’t find housing...until that’s fixed, no amount of money that we throw at the program is going to help, because we don’t have places for people to live.” – Anonymous listening session participant from the 2024 Northwest Climate Resilience Collaborative Report.

Environmental Justice Task Force

In its 2020 Recommendations, the Environmental Justice Task Force acknowledged that essential workers often come from BIPOC communities and risk their own health from unsafe work environments and overcrowded housing.⁸ Specific recommendations for how to plan for and address structural barriers to community engagement were provided:

⁶ See Appendix D, No. 26. [Environmental Justice \(EJ\) Council 2025-2027 Biennial Budget Recommendations](#). Adopted by the Council on September 26, 2024.

⁷ See Appendix D, No. 26. [Climate Adaptation Barriers and Needs Experienced by Northwest Coastal Tribes. Key Findings from Tribal Listening Sessions](#). August 2024. Northwest Climate Resilience Collaborative.

⁸ See Appendix D, No. 27. Environmental Justice Task Force. [Report to the Washington State Governor and Legislature. Recommendations for Prioritizing EJ in Washington State Government](#). Fall 2020.

When agency decisions have potential to significantly impact a specific community, agencies should work with representatives of that community to identify appropriate outreach and communication methods. Significant impacts include potential changes to critical determinants of health such as legal rights, finances, housing, and safety.

Further, agencies should use the publicly available [Washington Tracking Network](#) and the [Environmental Health Disparities Map](#) to support more comprehensive and inclusive community engagement planning. For example:

[R]eview the EHD map and its individual measures to learn about a population’s education background, availability of affordable housing, and proximity to sources of pollution to ensure outreach is accessible and reflects community concerns...WTN data on preferred language for non-English speaking populations will help ensure critical information reaches diverse audiences, and federal compliance obligations for language access are met.

Poverty Reduction Work Group (PRWG)

The PRWG was cited numerous times by interviewees as instructional to this effort. It was established in 2018 to oversee the operation of WorkFirst and TANF to determine evidence-based outcome measures as well as develop strategies to prevent and address adverse childhood experiences and reduce intergenerational poverty. PRWG is co-led by the Department of Commerce, Employment Security Department, and the Department of Social & Health Services, in partnership with tribal and urban Indians, state racial and ethnic commissions, employers, community-based organizations, advocates, and philanthropy, and serves in an advisory capacity to recommend policy actions to the Governor and Legislature.

A steering committee made up of 22 people with diverse demographic and geographic experiences of poverty set priorities and direction for the development of strategies and recommendations in a groundbreaking report– Blueprint for a Just and Equitable Future. The 10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty in Washington (2021).⁹ Specific housing recommendations include:

- Increase the availability of affordable childcare and housing for student parents on or near college campuses
- Increase and preserve affordable housing for renters and owners including increasing funding for HTF and weatherization
- Provide housing vouchers for homeownership in community land trusts that build individual capital while preserving long-term affordability in a community, preventing displacement of future generations
- Enact taxes on personal and corporate wealth that support equitable economic growth

⁹ See [Appendix D](#), No. 29.

Further information is provided about community land trusts –

In a community land trust you own your home, but the land is leased. You receive a standard mortgage, own the home, and can gift the home to your children. If you sell the home it must be under the conditions of the land trust, which is usually something like you are allowed to sell it for no more than the purchase price plus 1.5%-3% per year in appreciation, and the family you sell it to must be income qualified. This prevents neighborhoods such as the Central District or International District turning from a diverse low income communities, to one only accessible to high-income people. Land Trust properties can also aid in integration or prevention of segregation, but instead of apartments they are home ownership opportunities.”

The literature review performed for this project includes several sources that describe and affirm the benefits and uses of community land trusts.^{10, 11}

Additionally, a strategy to decriminalize poverty provides further recommendations for how to address the urgency of homelessness.

Provide adequate funding to increase the availability of safe, culturally responsive foster homes and permanent living options for children and youth involved with the child welfare system. Specifically: 1) Increase safety regulations and oversight of group and family homes that foster numerous children; 2) Eliminate the practice of sending children and youth to sleep in hotels or be located out of state; and 3) Provide more permanent supportive housing options for extended care youth and youth exiting the child welfare system.”

Statewide Advisory Council on Homelessness (SACH) and the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)

SACH is a governor-appointed advisory council created by Executive Order 15-01 in 1994 and revised in 2015. ICH members are state agency representatives appointed by agency directors. The work groups meet quarterly to collaborate and inform state policy to end homelessness. In 2019, SACH issued a letter to the Legislature regarding the State of Washington Homeless Housing Crisis Response System Strategic Plan 2019-2024, in relation to its recommendations to the Governor and the Affordable Housing Advisory Board. Specific recommendations include:¹²

¹⁰ See Appendix D, No. 7. Yadavalli, Anita, et al. [A Comprehensive Look at Housing Market Conditions Across America's Cities](#). Cityscape, vol. 22, no. 2 (2020), pp. 111-32. *JSTOR*.

¹¹ See Appendix D, No. 19. Montojo, N., Barton, S., Moore, E. [Opening the Door for Rent Control: Toward a Comprehensive Approach to Protecting California's Renters](#). UC Berkeley Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society. Policy Brief. 2018.

¹² [State Plan message to Washington state legislators](#). The Washington State Advisory Council on Homelessness. Washington State Department of Commerce. October 17, 2019.

- Make additional investments in the homeless crisis response system
- Create a state affordable housing plan
- Create a state homelessness prevention plan

Notably, the letter calls for expansion of soiled prevention efforts into a dedicated homeless prevention coalition including groups and stakeholders in behavioral health, criminal and juvenile justice, healthcare, law enforcement, employment, education, crime, victim assistance, and the foster care system.

Affordable Housing Advisory Board (AHAB)

AHAB consists of 25 members representing a variety of housing interests across the state including cities, counties, housing authorities, non-profit and for-profit developers, lenders, apartment owners and managers, shelter operators, permanent supportive housing providers, and the general public. The group advises the Department of Commerce on housing and housing-related issues. AHAB's 2023-2028 Housing Advisory Plan makes extensive recommendations for future actions to support additional development that address 13 specific issue areas.¹³

¹³ [2023-2028 Affordable Housing Advisory Plan](#). Affordable Housing Advisory Board (AHAB). Washington State Department of Commerce.

Key informant interviews

Key study and process design considerations were made by researchers as part of the [thematic analysis](#) performed of 19 key informant interviews. These considerations are provided in alignment and addition to the report's final recommendations to further support the team that will lead the final study. A detailed literature review is also provided in [Appendix D](#). Additional observational insights and recommendations are included for [Gaps and Barriers](#).

Study Design Considerations

1. Define Clear Objectives – articulate the purpose and intended outcomes with specific measurable goals:

- Assess the benefits, risks, and trade-offs of creating a centralized department including evaluating whether centralization will resolve inefficiencies or introduce new challenges.
- Identify how a new department could align with existing housing systems and programs, such as those managed by Commerce, DSHS, and local governments, to streamline efforts.
- Evaluate whether the department can effectively address systemic housing challenges, including:
 - Equity in resource allocation and policy implementation.
 - Regional variability in housing needs (e.g., urban homelessness vs. rural shortages).
 - Workforce capacity, including staffing, expertise, and retention within housing services.

2. Careholder Engagement -a robust engagement process is critical for designing a comprehensive study and should include:

- Program administrators: Those who manage housing services who can provide operational insights.
- Policy leaders: Decision-makers and experts shaping housing-related policies.
- Advocacy organizations and housing practitioners: Individuals with on-the-ground experience in delivering services and addressing community needs.
- Communities impacted by housing disparities: Prioritize BIPOC, low-income, and rural populations to ensure their voices and lived experiences shape study outcomes.
- Private sector and philanthropic partners: Careholders in housing development, funding, and innovative solutions.

3. Data Collection and Analysis - address data silos and inefficiencies by:

- Collecting and disaggregating data across demographics, geographic regions, and funding structures to reveal disparities.
- Including quantitative metrics (e.g., housing availability, resource allocation) alongside qualitative insights (e.g., stories of lived experiences, operational challenges) for a holistic understanding.
- Leveraging modern tools like GIS mapping and predictive analytics to identify housing patterns and project future needs.

4. Comparative Analysis – incorporate benchmarking against:

- Other states with centralized housing departments, analyzing best practices and potential pitfalls.
- International models, such as social housing frameworks that could inspire innovative approaches tailored to Washington’s needs.
- Explore models of interagency collaboration to address overlaps in housing-related responsibilities and funding streams.

5. Equity-Centered Framework must underpin all aspects of the study:

- Establish mechanisms to elevate historically underrepresented voices in both the study process and its recommendations.
- Design solutions to reduce systemic barriers, ensuring equitable resource distribution for marginalized communities.
- Analyze the impact of existing policies on vulnerable groups and propose adjustments to mitigate harm and foster inclusion.

6. Explore Operational and Fiscal Viability - address careholder concerns by examining:

- Risks of scope creep, duplication of efforts, and administrative inefficiencies, which could counteract the department’s purpose.
- Funding stability, including the potential for resource centralization or reallocation, and the trade-offs involved.
- Propose clear governance models and accountability structures to prevent layered administrative systems from stifling innovation.

7. Tailor to Local Context - recognize and address regional variability in housing needs:

- Urban areas: Focus on affordability and homelessness.
- Rural areas: Address housing shortages, infrastructure limitations, and geographic isolation.

- Develop region-specific strategies that balance localized decision-making with statewide coordination.

Process Design Considerations

1. Build on Existing Knowledge- leverage findings from prior studies and initiatives:

- Fragmentation across agencies creates inefficiencies and unclear roles.
- Housing efforts often fail to integrate with health, workforce, and educational systems.
- Data silos hinder evidence-based decision-making and transparency.

2. Highlight Cross-Sector Collaboration

- Ensure recommendations align with social determinants of housing, linking stability to health, education, and economic outcomes.
- Engage careholders across sectors to address interconnected challenges effectively.

3. Emphasize Risk Mitigation- address careholder concerns about administrative layers/bureaucracy:

- Propose clear boundaries for the department's scope and responsibilities.
- Develop robust accountability frameworks with measurable outcomes.

4. Elevate Equity and Accessibility

- Support smaller grassroots organizations to compete for funding and resources.
- Identify barriers such as inflexible regulations and centralized decision-making that disadvantage marginalized communities.

5. Adopt a Participatory Approach

- Actively involve impacted communities in designing the study, interpreting findings, and shaping recommendations.
- Prioritize lived experiences as critical data points, ensuring the study reflects diverse realities.

6. Maintain Transparency

- Share interim findings with careholders to validate the study's direction, address gaps, and build trust.
- Use transparent reporting to communicate progress and ensure alignment with community needs.

Recommendations to study a transition of programs to a new department

Leadership, Format and Focus

Which entity should lead the study and what housing types and financing structures should be considered?

The approach taken in this report assumes a new department of housing will be selected as a top priority by the Governor and Legislature. While this is not fully known, we believe this approach meets the intent of the charge to make these recommendations. Complementary and alternative policy solutions offered by interviewees are provided in a following section which are intended to create strategic support for short and long-term goals while benefiting the ongoing work of housing careholders in the event a new housing department is not prioritized.

It is also important to note there are real and perceived risks of funding this endeavor at the expense of existing programs and staff capacity with potential for service disruption and staff retention and hiring difficulties. These capacity and resource constraints and other barriers are provided in more depth in following sections.

The recommendation on the leadership and format of the final study is informed by many factors brought forward by interviewees including the need for strong unbiased leadership, strategic decision-making and phased funding approaches, building the political will to act and the ability to implement, co-creating equitable and effective, sustainable, affordable and profitable housing finance models and systems, and institutionalizing a governance structure that embodies the values, perspectives and directives of those who experience the most risk and face the most challenges within current systems of policies, programs and processes.

This is a profound exercise that must embrace politics, the reach and limits of government, pragmatic and structural solutions, authentic empathy and learning, holistic and healthy change, and more broadly the philosophy and ethics of caring for the social, economic and environmental needs and rights of today's population and future generations. The effort to study a transition to a new housing department calls for spaces that build coalition, determination and innovation grounded by ethics and evidence-based research and traditional systems of historical, environmental and cultural knowledge, and thus by the nature and complexity of the issue requires a multi-year effort and phased implementation approach.

“Ultimately, the key is defining the problem we are trying to solve for, rather than rushing to structural solutions, and ensuring that equity and accountability are built into the DNA of any new housing entity or initiative.” – Policy Leader careholder

Recommendation 1: The final study should be co-led by the Office of The Governor and the Office of Financial Management

- Engage directly in Government-to-Government communications with Tribal leaders to invite meaningful participation in the initiative
- Invite federal delegates and partners to support the initiative
- Create a vision for a statewide housing entity and a target date for implementation
- Include core equity principles in the visioning - racial and place-based equity, social and environmental justice
- Create a directive for a new subcabinet on housing outcomes including designated leadership and coordination roles, a process for the selection of members and terms. The subcabinet should prioritize inclusivity, transparency and a collaborative process that balances the need for urgency with the time required to meaningfully engage diverse careholders and develop well-considered recommendations.
- Engage directly with legislators and the chairs and co-chairs of existing housing and finance committees to enact legislation and funding necessary to implement the vision using evidence-based recommendations of the subcabinet
- Define phased approaches to implementation using evidence-based recommendations of the subcabinet
- Provide necessary legal and budgetary expertise to support action-oriented work groups under the subcabinet
- Receive and approve final recommendations from the subcabinet on the mission, implementation, operation, and maintenance of a new department of housing
- Receive ongoing recommendations from the subcabinet on housing outcomes

Recommendation 2: Hire an independent third-party or consultant to lead community engagement and co-lead the broader facilitation effort

“Any research organization that may be contracted with to support this study should have people with lived experience in housing instability/homelessness on their staff and be a diverse staff, especially as relates to race/ethnicity and LGBTQ/disability status as these groups are overrepresented in data on housing instability/homelessness.” – Policy Leader careholder

- Co-creates a robust and transparent outreach and engagement plan
- Co-creates guiding values and principles for a new housing department across careholder groups using a consensus model
- Enhances collaboration and careholder engagement by ensuring meaningful inclusion and participation of community members including those with lived experience of homelessness

- Advises leadership and subcabinet members on engagement best practices, protocols and processes including developing tools and strategies as needed to support ongoing invitations and dialogue
- Designs and leads community engagement plans and processes that bring forward and incorporate all necessary perspectives including appropriate compensation for community participants
- Co-designs and supports tribal outreach and engagement planning
- Supports facilitation of problem-identification, mapping systems intersections, and other subcabinet work groups as needed

Recommendation 3: Create a subcabinet on housing outcomes of state, regional and local housing and anti-poverty program and community practitioners¹⁴

Given the scale, complexity and enduring nature of the affordability and homelessness crisis and the need for broader work on the continuum of housing for middle-income and homeownership solutions a subcabinet structure is advantageous in several key ways. It can provide initial action-oriented support and grounded recommendations to move forward while enhancing existing efforts and continue in an oversight capacity that is actively rooted in and responsive to community needs.

The subcabinet structure honors the insights and recommendations of interviewees for collective, integrated, cross-sector and lifespan approaches built on a co-design framework informed by the Poverty Reduction Work Group model that employs balanced, phased and transparent processes.

“We had breakout groups that were looking at specific barriers or concerns that would need to be addressed.” – Person instrumental to establish a new state entity

- Provides recommendations to leadership on how to implement, fund, operate and maintain a new department of housing including decisions about which programs to include and exclude
- Invites community members with lived experience of homelessness to participate in a steering committee not limited to the initial effort
- Invites community members who face housing challenges to participate on a panel not limited to the initial effort
- Co-creates the mission and functions of a new housing department ensuring accountability and outcomes-driven perspectives are integrated

¹⁴ The term “practitioner” in this context denotes significant experience in providing direct services, implementing and operating policy solutions, working alongside or on-behalf of communities, and being actively engaged in a profession that works to improve housing and housing-related outcomes. This term was chosen intentionally to invite a broader perspective about the knowledgeable and passionate people who operate in and around systems of care for the shared benefit of all Washingtonians.

- Creates action-oriented work groups to address implementation needs and hurdles in support of making recommendations that leverage evidence-based research, supporting data and lessons learned
- Makes recommendations to improve coordination and alignment across systems and enhance intentional cross-collaboration efforts
- Provides ongoing support and oversight by issuing recommendations as needs evolve overtime

Consider these focus areas for action-oriented work groups under the subcabinet with appropriate funding and resource supports

“Understaffing and under-resourcing of our partners is a key challenge...Thought leaders are often overloaded, as they are tapped for many initiatives...Burnout is a significant problem across the housing ecosystem from public funders to case managers.” – Program Administrator careholder

The topics below are coalesced from the totality of responses received from participants.

- Based on the vision, guiding values and principles, define the problem and scope, and the most effective models or approaches to address that problem such as Social Determinants of Health
- Financing and funding – 1) investigate new funding development models and options for permanent, consistent and dedicated revenue source for housing programs, 2) examine the balance between capital investments and operating investments to support housing providers, services and residents, and 3) explore strategies to increase investments for capital and operating expenses particularly local revenue options for cities and counties
- Ensure a thoughtful and gradual or phased transition to a new housing department – 1) identify the functions and operational needs of a new department, 2) create a change management plan that supports wellbeing, stability and a healthy and inclusive culture, 3) create a cost analysis for all staffing needs that backfill core functions of existing agencies, including wage parity considerations
- Specific populations and their housing needs: individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, those receiving crisis behavioral health services, homeless population, individuals with a history of sexual offenses, minors in need of stabilized housing including overnight shelters, tribal communities, rural and urban communities
- Regulatory and policy environment – 1) identify ways to streamline state-level regulations, funding processes and eligibility requirements to be more flexible and user friendly, 2) examine the impact or outcomes of land use policies and incentives, zoning, and the Growth Management Act on housing development
- Housing justice - explore ways to address broader discrimination in communities across the state such as “NIMBYism” (Not In My Backyard) and “Bananas” (Build Absolutely Nothing

Anywhere Near Anything) including evictions and resistance from certain law enforcement and community members towards transitional housing

- Strategies to increase housing supply and affordability – 1) innovative approaches like modular construction, 2) addressing workforce shortages in construction and for staff at permanent supportive housing buildings, 3) promoting middle housing and homeownership opportunities, and 4) addressing wage stagnation and demand from high-earning households

Recommendation 4: Include all housing and finance types and new innovative funding approaches as part of supply and demand-side analyses for different regions or rural, suburban, and urban areas within the state

“The focus on large multifamily housing projects is not the most suitable approach for smaller, more scattered rural housing needs...The common belief that increasing housing supply will automatically reduce costs is overly simplistic. There are complex factors at play, and the private sector alone may not be able to build enough affordable housing.” – Policy Leader careholder

Equitable housing development starts with understanding the needs of your population.¹⁵ This is why a final study that is inclusive of many communities and careholder groups must consider the full range of housing and finance options.

Although affordability is a statewide issue, the conditions and constraints of housing markets vary considerably and may necessitate different policy or funding interventions. Understanding the different types of rent burden¹⁶ and other housing challenges that exist based on the characteristics of local housing markets can inform more effective solutions.¹⁷

Arguably, a core function of a new housing department would involve defining statewide, regional and local housing market characteristics and a range of policy and funding solutions to create desired outcomes.

Whether or not certain programs are incorporated into a new department of housing is a complex decision requiring collaboration, expertise and the ability to fund and support any desired reorganization. A program decision matrix is provided in a following section to assist future leaders and participants in making these complex assessments and decisions.

¹⁵ See Appendix D, No. 1. Ramakrishnan, K., Champion, E., Gallagher, M, Fudge, K. [Why Housing Matters for Upward Mobility: Evidence and Indicators for Practitioners and Policymakers](#). Urban Institute Research to Action Lab. January 2021.

¹⁶ Bruen, C. [A Closer Look at Cost-Burdened Renters](#). National Multifamily Housing Council Research Notes. June 28, 2022.

¹⁷ See Appendix D, No. 7. Yadavalli, Anita, et al. [A Comprehensive Look at Housing Market Conditions Across America's Cities](#). Cityscape, vol. 22, no. 2 (2020), pp. 111-32. *JSTOR*.

Given the complexity and scale of housing and finance types, it is more helpful to provide visual and mapping overviews rather than naming and describing each in detail. There are several such comprehensive resources that exist shared by interviewees and provided in [Appendix A](#).

New or innovative funding sources and approaches named by participants

“We also need to be thinking about how to fund new housing outside of the limited ways we currently focus. This study should look at loan guarantees, public banking, tax-increment financing, and any other out-of-the-box funding vehicles that are creative and offer an expansive view of what is possible.” – Program Administrator careholder

- Options for a permanent, consistent and dedicated revenue source for the Housing Trust Fund
- Rent assistance vouchers that allow individuals to choose their own housing
- A hybrid payment methodology that balances the need to verify costs with the flexibility to pay providers on a reimbursement basis
- Provide upfront capital funding for establishing housing and ongoing operations and services funding as one integrated continuous process
- Increasing operating investments to align with capital investments
- Provide greater resources to Fair Housing organizations
- Faircloth units from housing authorities could be utilized as new subsidies with state involvement
- Expand local revenue options like the real estate excise tax
- Expand the Reentry Housing Assistance Program to serve those leaving jails and not just state prisons as well as ways to invest in long-term program outcomes
- Examine what other states have done to fund housing such as using interest earnings from rainy day funds
- Explore the short and long-term effectiveness of incentives like the Multifamily Tax Exemption Program

Consultation and Collaboration

Which entities should consult and collaborate on the study?

The importance of developing a robust and transparent outreach and engagement plan for the final study cannot be overstated. This will ensure that all necessary perspectives are included in ways that honor the collective multifaceted nature of the work, the voices of participants and the goals of leadership, by providing clear roles and responsibilities for all participants and channels and feedback loops for broader validation and dissemination.

Recommendation 5: Co-develop and implement an outreach and engagement plan based on the community and tribal engagement approach of the Office of Equity Task Force

“Deadlines for the study should be realistic to the work required, to incorporate robust community / interested party engagement. Tribes need to be included and consulted with at the beginning of any study...There should be a list of every current agency, department/office and local organization efforts like the Housing Authorities that impact Washington state housing policies and practices.” – Policy Leader careholder

The Office of Equity Task Force’s community and tribal engagement approach is best explained in their proposal which is provided in [Appendix B](#).

Recommendation 6: Include the full continuum of housing careholders in outreach and engagement efforts aligning with the phased approach, structure and needs of the work

An important step in the development of the outreach and engagement plan would be to fully discover and map the entire housing careholder continuum. Interviewees provided extensive input on the perspectives, groups, organizations and individuals to be included in this work which is included in [Appendix C](#).

Program Decision Matrix

Which programs within state agencies should be considered for possible incorporation?

Decisions about which programs to consider for possible incorporation must be driven by the vision and guiding values and principles for a new housing department which are yet to be determined. However, the interview data collected supports the articulation of helpful criteria that can broadly be applied across program and issue areas as a decision matrix.

Recommendation 7: Evaluate and evolve these initial program decision criteria following or in alignment with the work to co-create guiding values and principles

Criteria No. 1 The value of a separate program

- Is there specialized expertise or focus?
- Does the program meet federal or other legal requirements for certain groups?
- Does the existing relationship support greater understanding, collaboration or resolution of an existing issue?
- Would an opportunity to partner with the program create system efficiencies or improvements?
- Does the program provide services or supports to other programs?

Criteria No. 2 Direct benefits to end users or populations

- What services or supports does the program provide and to whom?
- What is the quality and nature of existing relationships with those who are served including clients, communities, partners, funders or other housing careholders?
- Do existing relationships and/ or services remain intact or are they disrupted or ended by the transition of the program? If they are disrupted, how? If ended, does this create a service gap or barrier?
- Are there tangible benefits of transitioning the program to a new department for those who are being served? If so, what are those benefits?
- What are the potential risks or harm of transitioning the program for those currently being served?
- Do the tangible benefits outweigh the potential for risk or harm? And if so, how?

Criteria No. 3 Real and total costs to relocate and transition the program

- What is the intended role and function of this program in the new department?
- How many total staff are being moved and what are their job classifications?
- How are staff allocated across the new department?
- Do job classifications need to be updated to reflect new roles and responsibilities?
- What is the overhead, administrative, onboarding and change management costs required to support the successful transition and retention of staff?
- How much overhead and administrative support is required to backfill positions from agencies who are losing staff?
- How are relationship, service or systems disruptions accounted for and mitigated?

Gaps and Barriers

What gaps and barriers to establishing a department of housing should be identified and considered?

The gaps and barriers identified by participants speak to the reach and limitations of state and federally funded programs and local resources within existing mandates, regulatory structures and larger social, economic and market realities while embracing the potential for systems-related improvements and change to meet these challenges. Throughout the report, we provide illustrative quotes that highlight each challenge, along with insights and recommendations drawn from the data. These are informed by the researchers' observations using a [constructivist grounded theory \(CGT\) approach](#), ensuring that the findings are deeply rooted in the lived experiences and contexts of the study participants.

Systems

Leadership – a lack of clear leadership and vision from the state on affordable housing and homelessness

“There seems to be a lack of leadership and vision when it comes to developing new programs and approaches to homelessness...While there are some bright spots...the overall culture seems to be one of rigidity and a reluctance to think outside the box.” – Advocacy careholder

CGT Insight: Bureaucratic processes are experienced as prioritizing compliance over responsiveness, creating bottlenecks.

Recommendation: Evaluate alternative funding models like “rapid acquisition” funds or continuous application processes to enhance responsiveness and adaptability.

Funding and resources – a lack of adequate investment including operating subsidies and support services to ensure housing stability for the most vulnerable populations

“If there were sufficient resources for all low-income people...the need for specialized housing assistance programs could be eliminated, and the focus could be on providing direct assistance to clients instead. We shouldn’t be in the business of providing housing programs.” – Program Administrator careholder

CGT Insight: Data coding highlights systemic inequities, where smaller grassroots organizations struggle to compete for funding.

Recommendation: Employ equity-driven methodologies in the study to prioritize inclusive resource distribution and amplify marginalized voices.

Capacity and resources – state agencies and programs lack sufficient staffing and operational capacity to address the scale of the problem

“The scale of the problem is immense, with an estimated 1 million homes needed to be built over the next 20 years to keep pace with demand. While we have made record investments in state-subsidized affordable housing, we are only able to get 8-9,000 units into the pipeline annually, which pales in comparison to the overall need.” – Program Administrator careholder

Organizational and structural – potential for disruption, loss of institutional knowledge and staff burnout from complex reorganizations

“The homelessness situation in the state continues to worsen despite the billions of dollars invested. This is a source of frustration and discouragement for staff, as they strive to find effective solutions to address the large scale and complexity of the problem...There needs to be a thoughtful change management process because the potential transition to a new department of housing would take a significant human toll.” – Program Administrator careholder

Fragmentation and coordination – a lack of a centralized coordinated approach to develop and implement a comprehensive housing strategy

“It is difficult to maintain continuity and a cohesive, long-term vision on housing policy given the two-year budget cycles and frequent turnover of elected officials. An Office of Housing could help provide the necessary coordination and leadership.” – Policy Leader careholder

CGT Insight: Fragmentation is perpetuated by siloed funding mechanisms and competing mandates across agencies.

Recommendation: The study should explore the feasibility of consolidating overlapping roles into a centralized Department of Housing. This could streamline processes, clarify responsibilities, and enhance cross-agency coordination.

Complexity – the housing system involves a complex web of regulations, eligibility requirements, and funding streams that are difficult to navigate

“Another agency or another commission that does the same thing...is not going to provide one new unit of housing, but it’s going to be very expensive for the state... because it’s one more level of bureaucracy to get through.” – Advocacy careholder

Integration – housing initiatives lack integration with support services like Medicaid, behavioral health, and case management

“Ideally, the capital funding and operational funding would be seamlessly integrated, with a continuous, unified process that provides both the upfront resources for establishing housing and the ongoing support for service delivery. This would create a more streamlined and effective system for programming and sustaining housing assistance programs.” – Program Administrator careholder

“Washington is not a fully integrated care state, meaning that while physical and behavioral health services are under managed care organizations, long-term services and supports are not. This creates challenges in coordinating these different aspects of care. And creating clear divisions between Medicaid services and housing is not the best approach, as coordination is essential.” – Program Administrator careholder

CGT Insight: Interagency disconnects hinder service delivery and long-term stability for vulnerable populations

Recommendation: Investigate how a new housing department could act as a hub for integrated care models that align housing with supportive services

Eligibility and prioritization – coordinated entry systems are not working effectively, leading to large vacancies and mismatches between people and available housing

“The coordinated entry system has to prioritize those at imminent risk of death or trauma who are literally unsheltered. We have to actively spend a lot of administrative energy at the state and local level determining who to leave outside...You see the same dynamic with affordable housing - for every five people who are eligible, only one is getting the subsidy. The triage process will exclude the remaining four.” – Policy Leader careholder

CGT Insight: Misalignment in processes suggesting the need for standardized, transparent referral mechanisms

Recommendation: Explore best practices for coordinated entry systems, focusing on models that optimize occupancy rates and enhance service alignment

Oversight and accountability – a lack of oversight, monitoring and accountability within the current housing system, particularly how funding is allocated and used by grantees

“Passing funding to counties who then disperse it to frontline workers...means the state has limited visibility into how funds are being used and who is (or isn’t) accessing services. There are pros and cons to this hands-off approach. It can insulate the funding from political interference, but it also leads to a lack of oversight on issues like tenant screening practices, evictions, and the maintenance of affordable housing units. Where do people go? There’s no ombudsman for people experiencing homelessness or who live in affordable housing.” – Advocacy careholder

CGT Insight: Misalignment between intention and outcomes indicate accountability mechanisms remain underdeveloped

Recommendation: Explore governance structures that prioritize clear accountability, potentially through dedicated cross-agency project managers under a unified housing department

Local control – local jurisdictions often create unnecessary barriers and requirements that crease costs and make it difficult to develop affordable housing

“This federated, decentralized nature of housing policy makes it very difficult to achieve the outcomes outlined in comprehensive plans or broader regional/statewide targets. We can track the numbers, but there are no inherent triggers or mechanisms to compel compliance and ensure those goals are met. The use of carrots and sticks to incentivize progress is an area of political and policy discussion, but there is no centralized forum where this is being elevated into a cohesive, executable statewide housing strategy.” – Policy Leader careholder

CGT Insight: Systemic barriers are tied to sociopolitical dynamics, including NIMBYism and local government autonomy

Recommendation: Include an analysis of state-level zoning preemptions or streamlined zoning policies. Incorporate comparative studies of jurisdictions with successful zoning reforms.

Social and Economic

Inequitable development – historical and ongoing patterns of racial and economic segregation

“The state’s current approach to funding affordable housing can lead to socioeconomic segregation...This effort must engage with local communities to address their specific housing needs, rather than relying solely on decisions made by experts. Creating statewide goals and policies without first engaging with local communities would be devastating and fail to address the specific needs of different populations.” – Policy Leader careholder

“Across the state, there are many individual stories of cities rejecting affordable housing or delaying community conversations, often due to specific local concerns. However, when viewed collectively, these incidents point to a broader pattern of discrimination against housing for those who need it most in our communities.” – Program Administrator careholder

Community resistance – misconceptions and fears towards the development of affordable and supportive housing

“There is a need for collaboration among housing administrators, service providers, law enforcement, and community members, to address the complex issues surrounding transitional housing including the need to clarify the definition and scope of transitional housing, the difficulties faced by service providers in dealing with tenant-landlord disputes and evictions, the resistance from some law enforcement and community members towards having transitional housing in their neighborhoods, and the importance of bringing together all the relevant parties to have open and constructive dialogues to find solutions. ” – Program Administrator careholder

Political discrimination towards vulnerable groups - influence of political agendas, power dynamics, and harmful stereotypes on housing and homelessness policies

“There is a fear that [JD] Vance may push for policies that discriminate against people with substance use disorders and transgender individuals, similar to the previous Trump administration’s attempts to restrict transgender people’s access to shelters. There are existing challenges faced by transgender individuals in shelters, and the need for the state to take more proactive measures to protect this vulnerable population. Providers may need to refuse federal funding if it means complying with discriminatory requirements, and in such cases, the state should support these providers to lift them up for taking actions to protect our communities.” – Advocacy careholder

Income discrimination

“Even when families have obtained a federal housing voucher, they face difficulties in finding landlords willing to accept the voucher as a form of payment, despite laws that prohibit income discrimination...There is a lack of enforcement of laws prohibiting income discrimination in housing which has a negative impact on the ability of programs to help families to successfully secure and maintain housing.” – Program Administrator careholder

Racism, inequality and poverty

“Homelessness issues are symptoms of deeper societal problems such as economic inequality, racism, and poverty. It’s important to understand and address the root causes. A housing agency may not be able to tackle all of these broader social justice issues, but it should incorporate an understanding of how poverty, racism, and other systemic factors intersect and influence housing policies and decisions.” – Program Administrator careholder

Political dynamics – the creation of a new housing department could become politicized leading to groups vying for influence and advantage

“There is a real danger that this could lead to a move away from best practices like Housing First and harm reduction, in favor of policies that cater to the demands of those who do not want affordable housing or “those types of people” in their communities. What we need is strong, principled leadership that is willing to make difficult decisions and implement evidence-based solutions without succumbing to political pressure or the biases of the masses.” – Advocacy careholder

Markets

Workforce shortages – construction labor, and the difficulty of recruiting and retaining frontline staff

“We need to be able to recruit and retain staff who can afford to live in the community and have the expertise to provide the quality of services that our residents need. However, we have not sufficiently raised wages and operating dollars for these buildings (Permanent Supportive Housing), which has led to a shortage of staff, an inability to open buildings, and a lack of quality services. Residents with high behavioral health needs require more support to remain stable, but without adequate resources, this leads to issues like water damage and physical damage to the buildings. This creates additional financial problems.” – Program Administrator careholder

Complimentary or Alternative Policies

Policy solutions are often understood to be on a spectrum or continuum of change. Often, holistic policy approaches intentionally allow for the inclusion of multiple pathways to achieve similar goals. The solutions offered by participants below can be viewed as either strategic solutions or incremental measures, both of which are helpful to move forward on reaching shared goals. Additionally, the recommendation made in this report to create a new subcabinet on housing outcomes could be a standalone solution in lieu or support of a new housing department.

“The relationship with the supportive housing system is crucial, regardless of whether smaller housing programs are integrated into a larger housing department...There needs to be a holistic approach that integrates housing with access to healthcare, behavioral health services, and employment support. A concern is the pressure and expectations that could be placed on a standalone housing department to solve homelessness without adequate financial resources and the risk of becoming a ‘scapegoat’ for the issue.” – Program Administrator careholder

1. Establish a new political position within the Department of Commerce that is dedicated to housing with the ability to participate in cabinet meetings and drive a housing-focused agenda
2. Create multiple housing liaison positions across agencies to provide the support needed to better coordinate or collaborate across systems of care
3. Establish a dedicated housing research center either within a state department or university to provide centralized access to information and data including zoning laws, affordability and other housing-related issues
4. Consider writing the final study into legislation authorizing funding for a housing research center
5. Improve coordination, cross-collaboration or integration between existing housing-related programs, agencies and systems of care rather than consolidating programs under a new department

Equitable and evidence-based housing development frameworks

This section highlights two relevant frameworks for the development of equitable housing policies and approaches. [Appendix D](#) provides an extensive annotated literature review of additional research, models and policy proposals that can be considered. Additionally, the Washington State Department of Health administers the [Social Determinants of Health dashboard](#), the [Washington Tracking Network](#), and the [Environmental Health Disparities Map](#). These are excellent data rich resources for examining disparities, risks or vulnerabilities for different population groups and areas, including measures of cost burden or “housing instability” and overcrowding among others.

The effects of racist policies and practices that further disinvestment and discrimination against Black communities and other communities of color are bedrock issues for the development and accessibility of affordable housing.¹⁸ Quality housing is foundational for upward mobility from poverty, and robust evidence shows that housing cost burden limits economic success and impacts mental health, especially for individuals with low incomes.¹⁹ Further, studies show that evictions affect resident economic success, power and autonomy.²⁰

Incorporating the US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty’s definition of upward mobility, Enterprise Community Partners and The Urban Institute’s joint research defines a **theory of change** based on five characteristics of housing that lead to upward mobility.²¹ Characteristics are identified based on research and practice as specific goal areas. Each goal area includes specific outcomes and examples

¹⁸ See Appendix D, No. 9. [The role of housing policy in causing our nation’s racial disparities – and the role it must play in solving them](#). A policy paper from Habitat for Humanity International for all U.S. Habitat for Humanity affiliates, partners and supporters. August 2020.

See Appendix D, No. 10. Butler, A., Carter, K., Lowery, L. [Embedding Racial Equity in Housing](#). National League of Cities. July 2020.

See Appendix D, No. 11. Mitchell, B., Edlebi, J., Meier, H., Richardson, J., Chen, L. [Decades of Disinvestment: Historic Redlining and Mortgage Lending Since 1981](#). National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC). May 2024.

See Appendix D, No. 12. Enterprise Community Partners. [The Link Between Historic Redlining and Current Climate Risks](#). August 2021.

¹⁹ See Appendix D, No. 2. Givens, M., Gennuso, K., Jovaag, A., Willems Van Dijk, J., Johnson, S. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. [County Health Rankings Key Findings 2019](#).

²⁰ See Appendix D, No. 18. Collinson, R., Reed, D. [The Effects of Evictions on Low-Income Households](#). New York University Wagner School of Public Service. December 2018.

²¹ See Appendix D, No. 1. Ramakrishnan, K., Champion, E., Gallagher, M., Fudge, K. [Why Housing Matters for Upward Mobility: Evidence and Indicators for Practitioners and Policymakers](#). Urban Institute Research to Action Lab. January 2021.

of community metrics. Evidence that links each outcome to upward mobility is explored for people in different phases of life. See Table 1.

Mobility is defined in three parts based on intersectional factors in education, workforce development, health care, safety, justice, local governance and others.

- **Economic success** – income and income adequacy, employment and job quality, skills and human capital, family demographic circumstances
- **Power and autonomy** – agency, coping with stress, a growth mindset, physical and mental health
- **Being valued in community** – social connectedness, social capital, relational stress, social standing, trauma



Source: US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty.

Table 1: Enterprise Community Partners & The Urban Institute’s Five Characteristics of Housing

Goal	Outcomes	Metrics
Housing quality	Safe and healthy housing	Number of units that are adequate, moderately inadequate, or severely inadequate Average blood-lead levels in states and counties among children under 6 years old
Housing affordability	Housing cost burden	Number and share of families spending more than 30 percent and more than 50 percent of their income on housing
	Crowding	Share of occupied units that are crowded or overcrowded Share of households that have several families or unrelated individuals
Housing stability	Multiyear stability	Number of moves Student turnover with a particular school district
	Evictions	Eviction rate
	Homelessness	Number of people experiencing homelessness on a single night Number of people seeking or receiving homeless services
Housing that builds wealth	Home equity, credit, and asset building	Disparity in the homeownership rate by race and ethnicity
Neighborhood context	High-opportunity neighborhoods	Mobility Metrics Kirwan Institute USR Opportunity Index Opportunity360 PolicyLink Racial Equity Atlas

Secondly, a comprehensive framework created by academic researchers, community advocates and policymakers is the “five Ps” approach, which builds from three traditionally referenced principles – protection, production, and preservation, adding power and placement: See Table 2.

The framework was presented in a Policy Brief as part of a larger research effort undertaken to explore options for rent control in California with a housing shortage gap estimated at 1.5 million homes for extremely-low and very low-income households, and a projected need of 3.5 million new homes statewide by 2025.²²

The Policy Brief finds that having a home is more than just a shelter; it shapes access to schools, jobs, clean air, safe neighborhoods and upward mobility in alignment with the Enterprise Community Partners & The Urban Institute’s Five Characteristics of Housing explained above. The paper also finds that –

A significant part of the cost of housing being charged to tenants, and collected by landlords, is not due to any investment or action by landlords. Costs have increased in part because of public actions that improve neighborhood safety, air quality, school quality, and other qualities of life that increase property values. Because public action creates value, government has a legitimate responsibility to limit how much of it translates to increased rental costs.

Table 2: UC Berkeley’s Five P’s Framework for Diverse Housing Needs

Goal	Description
Protection	Protecting tenants and socioeconomically disadvantaged residents from displacement (e.g. just cause for eviction and rent control policies)
Production	Increasing the production of new housing by generating funding, removing exclusionary land use policy barriers, and other strategies (e.g. affordable housing linkage fees, public land policies, elimination of exclusionary zoning)
Preservation	Preserving existing affordable housing, including income-restricted units and units on the market that are rented at relatively lower rates (e.g. funding programs that support the acquisition and rehabilitation of older affordable rental units)
Power	Ensuring equitable community participation that leads to responsive and inclusive housing decisions (e.g. an expanded role for limited-equity cooperatives and community land trusts)

²² See Appendix D, No. 19. Montojo, N., Barton, S., Moore, E. [Opening the Door for Rent Control: Toward a Comprehensive Approach to Protecting California’s Renters](#). UC Berkeley Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society. Policy Brief. 2018.

Goal	Description
Placement	Creating access to housing for socioeconomically disadvantaged people in places that connect residents to opportunities and break patterns of segregation (e.g. fair housing laws and source of income discrimination laws)

Project approach and methodology

The aim of this work was to conduct exploratory research that provides essential information and develops a credible and equitable approach for project sponsors and careholders to study housing issues and policy goals envisioned for a new housing department.

To build a comprehensive understanding of the potential creation of a new housing department that informs understanding of the state's housing systems, networks, funding landscape and challenges, this research employed a multi-method approach, including a detailed literature review, 19 key informant interviews, and an analysis of previous efforts to establish state agencies.

Research Design

The researchers used a constructivist grounded theory (CGT) approach to better understand the perspectives, experiences, and knowledge of key careholders related to the potential creation of a new state housing department. CGT ensures that the knowledge generated is co-constructed between researchers and participants, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between data collection and analysis. Reflexive thematic analysis further supported the identification of key themes and patterns.

Key Informant Interviews

Primary data was co-created through 19 key informant interviews and 2 written responses with individuals possessing specialized knowledge or expertise on housing issues in Washington State. Informants were identified by project sponsors and team members across four careholder groups noted below. Interviews were conducted via recorded video calls and transcribed using qualitative data analysis software.

Careholder Group Definitions

- Policy Leader: a person with substantial oversight or thought leadership of statewide housing programs or services who has the ability to influence and shape the implementation of public policies.
- Program Administrator: a person who has an instrumental role in the design, administration, leadership or delivery of specific statewide housing program(s) or services.
- Advocacy Organization or group: a person whose work is to directly support, improve or influence housing development or delivery of related services within communities or across the state.
- Those instrumental in previous efforts to establish new state entities: can include participants from the Office of Equity task force, the Social Equity in Cannabis Task Force, or the Blue Ribbon Commission on Delivery of Services to Children and Families.

Confidentiality and Informed Consent

An interview protocol was created to ensure the same process steps were followed for each interview, and that every interviewee received the same information and opportunities to ask questions. Participants were provided with an informational packet during the outreach process to inform them of the purpose of the research, provide confidentiality and informed consent disclosure, and the interview questions in advance for their consideration. Additionally, an abbreviated version of the confidentiality and informed consent disclosure was read at the beginning of each interview. Interviewees were also invited to approach the questions in whatever ways made the most sense from their perspective and to ask clarifying questions if they needed more information before responding. Permission was sought to acknowledge interviewees' organizations on the front of the report when doing so could make it obvious who the interviewee may be to some readers.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Following key informant interviews, reflexive thematic analysis was conducted to organize and interpret the data. This method involves coding the interview transcripts iteratively, reviewing the data multiple times to identify themes that emerge directly from participants' contributions. This process acknowledges the subjectivity of the researcher and positions the analysis as reflexive, meaning the researcher's interpretations evolve through constant interaction with the data.

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT)

The use of CGT guided both the interview process and the thematic analysis. CGT emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge through engagement with participants, ensuring that the data collection process is adaptive and responsive. As themes emerge from the initial interviews, they inform the refinement of research questions and strategies for subsequent interviews, allowing for deeper exploration of key issues.

Reflexivity and Iterative Feedback

To ensure accuracy and mutual understanding, summary reports of interview findings were shared with participants, who had the opportunity to review and validate the information. This feedback loop is central to the CGT approach, as it ensures that the emerging insights remain closely tied to participants' lived experiences. The post-interview process also provided the option for interviewees to share their interview summaries with colleagues to provide additional information or clarification about the topics discussed.

Analysis of Secondary Data

In addition to primary data collection, a literature review on trends and best practices for equitable and evidence-based housing development systems was conducted to supplement the findings from the key informant interviews. This secondary analysis provides comparative frameworks to inform the thematic analysis and policy considerations.

Conclusion

The methodological approach, combining CGT and reflexive thematic analysis, is ideal for exploring complex social and policy issues like housing. By engaging stakeholders deeply in the research process and co-constructing knowledge, the study produces actionable insights that are rooted in lived experiences and directly inform the development of a new housing department in Washington State.

Research questions

The below core set of research questions was used for each interview for comparability. Additional questions were tailored for individuals based on known expertise and the learning that occurred during the interview process.

1. What is important for the state and careholders to know or understand about your work, or your organization's work, on housing development or services? From your perspective, who are you serving, and why does this matter? What unique expertise or experiences does your organization bring to the housing space? How do you define the key challenges you face, and how do these challenges interact with the broader housing system in the state?
2. From your perspective, what are the key opportunities, challenges, or barriers to expanding quality housing across the state? In your view, what broader systems or structure influence these challenges, and how do you envision addressing them? What are the deeper, perhaps less obvious, issues we need to consider when developing solutions?
3. What do you think is the most important information, expertise, or perspectives we need to fully study this issue? Specifically, do you have any recommendations about what housing and financing types and programs should be included in the study?
4. How can stakeholders work together to find better solutions in a way that includes all necessary perspectives? Specifically, do you have any recommendations about who or what groups should be invited to consult and collaborate on this study such as legislators, agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses and local jurisdictions? In other words, whose voices are we missing in policy discussions? What barriers have historically or otherwise prevented their inclusion, and how can we intentionally engage these groups in the future study?
5. From your perspective, how should leadership and decision-making be structured for studying the potential transition to a statewide department of housing? What processes would ensure that all voices are heard and that the study is conducted in a fair and inclusive manner? In your view, which entity-such as an agency, contractor, or task force-might best lead this effort, and what factors influence your recommendation?
6. Reflecting on today's discussion, is there anything additional you would like to add that might help us think through this effort to investigate having a statewide department of housing more holistically? Based on your experience, is there anything we haven't covered that you believe should be considered?

Research Questions for those instrumental in previous efforts to establish new state entities

1. Can you please describe your role in the [commission or task force], and how you understood the outcomes of the work? How did your perspective or approach evolve throughout the process?

2. From your perspective, what were the most significant challenges or barriers you encountered in your work? How did you and the other careholders navigate these challenges together, and what strategies emerged from these interactions?
3. How would you describe the decision-making process or processes in your work? Thinking back on your experiences, what processes were most effective, helpful or not helpful for different participants?
4. Looking back, if you had the opportunity to revisit this work, what changes would you consider making and why? How do you think those changes could have influenced the outcomes or the involvement of careholders?
5. Reflecting on your experience, what accomplishments are you most proud of in this work? What makes these accomplishments significant to you in the context of the challenges and outcomes you faced?
6. Reflecting on today's discussion, is there anything additional you would like to add that might help us think through the current effort to investigate having a statewide department of housing? Based on your experience, is there anything we haven't covered that you believe should be considered?

Appendix A – Program and Finance Mapping

1. Each county in Washington reports all expenditures by funding sources for each homeless housing project in their community. Commerce combines expenditures data with HMIS data to create The Annual County Expenditure Report ([The Golden Report](#)).

For 2023, the Golden Report shows 39 unique funding sources reported across more than 2,800 projects. Twenty-nine of the fund sources supported operating and service expenditures totaling \$576,241,909. The remaining ten fund sources, which include \$3.2 million in private donations, supported capital expenditures totaling \$31,628,291. In total, these projects served 225,643 people across 161,971 households for a total cost of \$607,870,200. Approximately one-third of households served had adults and children with a cost per day per household of \$25.50.

2. A resource provided by the Permanent Supportive Housing Collaborative shows [Washington's state-funded rental subsidy programs](#) including breakouts of temporary or “bridge” and long-term rental subsidies provided by the Department of Commerce, the Department of Social and Health Services, and the Health Care Authority.
3. The Permanent Supportive Housing Resource Map was supported by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as part of the Healthy Housing, Healthy Communities (H3C) Partnership Initiative convened by the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. The Map shows all the state level resources that exist to support permanent supportive housing developments that typically intersect with both housing and health systems, including capital, operating and services. It is a working draft document intended as a high-level resource.
4. The [Ruckelshaus Report, Pathways to Housing Security](#), includes a graphic overview of current investments across the housing continuum and interconnectedness among entities in Washington (provided below), as well as an overview of recent state government initiatives and regional coordination efforts.

Exhibit 1. Investment Landscape



Appendix B – Office of Equity Task Force Proposal

The [Office of Equity Task Force Proposal](#) includes the recommended approach to tribal and community engagement for the future effort to study a transition of statewide housing programs into a single housing department.

The Office of Equity Task Force’s engagement approach is inclusive of using the [Washington Tracking Network](#), and [Social Determinants of Health](#).

Additionally, this report recommends the use of the [Environmental Health Disparities Map](#) in alignment with previous recommendations made by the Environmental Justice Task Force in the Fall [2020 Report on Recommendations for Prioritizing EJ in Washington State Government](#).

Appendix C – Initial Careholders List

The below list includes all of the careholders named by project participants categorized broadly and by alphabetical order as a starting point to support a future effort to fully discover and map the entire housing careholder continuum. There may be instances where groups are named in different ways or duplicated which were intentionally kept at this early stage.

Federal Delegates and Partners

Representative Adam Smith

Senator Patty Murray

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

State Legislators

Chairs, co-chairs and minority party leaders on housing and finance committees

Former Speaker and Representative Frank Chopp

Representative Emily Alvarado

Representative Nicole Macri

Representative Tana Senn

Those involved in HB 2270 (2023)

Those involved in HB 1220 (2021)

Tribes

Tribal leaders, representatives or liaisons

Tribal housing authorities and jails

Urban Indian organizations

Washington State Agencies or Entities

Agency tribal liaisons

Department of Children, Youth and Families

Department of Commerce including the Housing Division, Growth Management Unit and the CHIP Program

Department of Corrections including the Reentry Housing Assistance Program

Department of Health

Department of Social and Health Services including the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance

Governor's Office of Indian Affairs

Growth Management Hearings Board

Health Care Authority including Foundational Community Supports and the Rapid Care Team

Office of the Attorney General

Office of Equity

Office of Financial Management

Office of Public Defense

Office of The Governor

Washington State Building Code Council

Advisory Groups and Relevant Commissions, Councils and Committees

Advisory Committee to the Office of Homeless Youth

Behavioral Health Advisory Committee

Environmental Justice Council

Department of Commerce Policy Advisory Team

Department of Commerce Affordable Housing Advisory Board

Housing and Child Welfare Subcommittee of the Family Treatment Council

Interagency Council on Health Disparities

Interagency Council on Homelessness

Permanent Supportive Housing Committee

Poverty Reduction Work Group

Statewide Advisory Council on Homelessness

Independent or Quasi-Governmental Organizations and Partners

Area Agencies on Aging

Association of Washington Housing Authorities and housing authorities statewide

Columbia Legal Services

Community Partnership for Transition Solutions

Disability Rights Washington

Fair Housing organizations and fair lending agencies

Housing Development Consortia

Human Rights organizations

King County Coalition on Homelessness

Legal Counsel for Youth and Children
 Managed Care Organizations
 National Alliance on Mental Illness
 Northwest Justice Project
 Purpose Dignity Action
 REACH
 Regional housing organizations
 Rural housing organizations
 TeamChild
 Washington State Housing Finance Commission

Advocacy Organizations or Think Tanks

ACLU of Washington
 Building Industry Association of Washington
 Construction workforce advocates
 Futurewise
 Low Income Housing Institute
 Moderate income workforce advocates
 Nonprofit organizations that operate in rural areas like Catholic Community Services
 Partners for our Children
 Sightline Institute
 The Mockingbird Society
 Washington Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocates
 Washington Farm Bureau
 Washington Low Income Housing Alliance

Local Governments or Municipal Organizations

Association of Washington Cities
 City planning staff, permit officers or officials
 County jails
 Courts
 King County Department of Community and Human Services

Local government elected officials
 Neighborhood groups
 Police chiefs
 Puget Sound Regional Council
 Washington State Association of Counties

Community Organizations or Groups

By and For Organizations
 Community Action Programs
 Continuum of Care entities
 Community development organizations
 Community housing providers
 Emerging BIPOC organizations
 Farmworker housing organizations like the Okanogan Community Action Partnership
 Foreclosure prevention service providers
 Home and community services
 Housing vendors and service providers including iCoach and Navigator units, and transitional housing properties
 Housing counselors and McKinney-Vento homeless coordinators in public schools
 Refugee resettlement agencies, ethnic community-based organizations and nonprofits

Private and Nonprofit Developers

Low income housing providers
 Private landlords and developers
 Nonprofit housing and service providers

Business Community

The Washington Round Table
 Microsoft
 Amazon

Perspectives

Agencies with a nexus with affordable housing
 Agencies and programs that regulate housing including SEPA

Black owned developer businesses like Remy Construction

Democratic and Republican

Frontline service providers from across the workforce, including those who serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Housing practitioners or service providers

Individuals with lived experience of homelessness or housing instability

Individuals who face housing challenges including renters, homeowners, and those seeking homeownership opportunities

Individuals with deep experience in the housing sector

Legislators who play a key role in housing policy and funding decisions

Market-rate and affordable housing developers and advocates

People on waitlists for public housing vouchers

Representatives from related systems or agencies – food assistance, welfare, corrections, behavioral health, long-term care

Rural, urban and regional perspectives on homelessness and affordability

State agency staff across existing housing programs

Tenants in affordable housing including tax subsidized properties

Thought leaders from universities or policy think tanks

Appendix D – Annotated Literature Review

National and International

1. Ramakrishnan, K., Champion, E., Gallagher, M, Fudge, K. [Why Housing Matters for Upward Mobility: Evidence and Indicators for Practitioners and Policymakers](#). Urban Institute Research to Action Lab. January 2021.

Housing is foundational for upward mobility from poverty as defined by the [US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty](#), which includes 1) power and autonomy, 2) being valued in community, and 3) economic success. Specific goals are identified based on research and practice including housing quality (safety and health), affordability (cost burden), stability (length of tenure), housing that builds wealth (home equity, credit and asset building), and the neighborhood context (high opportunity). Each goal area includes specific outcomes and examples of community metrics. Evidence that links each outcome to upward mobility is explored for people in different phases of life.

2. Givens, M., Gennuso, K., Jovaag, A., Willems Van Dijk, J., Johnson, S. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. [County Health Rankings Key Findings 2019](#).

There is robust evidence that housing cost burden limits economic success and impacts mental health, especially for individuals with low incomes. For every 10 percent increase in the share of households severely cost burdened, 84,000 more people in the county will be in fair or poor health.

3. Reynolds, K. [Creating Permanent Housing Affordability: Lessons From German Cooperative Housing Models](#). Cityscape, vol. 20, no. 2, 2018, pp. 263–76. JSTOR.

The article examines different forms of cooperative housing as an approach for long-term affordable housing for low-and moderate-income persons in Germany and the United States, who “have remarkably similar funding instruments for housing and the urban development programs that support affordable housing.” Shared equity housing models, mostly community land trusts and cooperative housing, have become increasingly popular in the United States as a local response to increasing inequality.

4. Hoffman, A. [The Ingredients of Equitable Development Planning. A Cross-case Analysis of Equitable Development Planning and CDFIs](#). Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University. 2019.

This report discusses the emergence of a new form of community and urban planning that is focused on revitalizing disinvested communities in urban areas including lessons learned specifically in Washington D.C., Detroit, MI, and Phoenix AZ, as a response to income inequality. One lesson learned is that CDFI’s (community development financial institutions) play an important role in equitable development campaigns including “quarterback

organization, lead financier, and/or community partner, as well as fill valuable transactional niches.”

Financing equitable development includes 2 models - the incremental or the civic consortium. The Incremental model is to start small and gradually obtain financial support through institutional alliances and organizational partnerships, while the civic consortium model begins with a large civic campaign that aims to transform an area which includes a focus on equitable development.

5. Bailey, P. [Housing and Health Partners Can Work Together to Close the Housing Affordability Gap](#). Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. January 2020.

More than 17 million households eligible for federal rental assistance do not receive it due to limited funding, thereby contributing to a large percentage of renter households that are cost burdened or extremely cost burdened. Cost burdened renters face financial and housing instability and a heightened risk for a variety of negative health outcomes. Managed care organizations and Medicaid programs have started to invest in small-scale affordable housing initiatives (Washington note: Integrated Managed Care demonstration project, Apple Health and Homes Unit), as well as non-profit hospitals. A risk of paying for housing with Medicaid is that beneficiaries could lose their rental assistance if they were no longer eligible.

Specific strategies are included for increasing the availability of affordable housing in an environment where housing is underfunded, such as expanding the housing choice voucher program, establishing a [renters' tax credit program](#), expanding and maintaining existing federal, state and local programs, and continuing housing investments from MCOs, hospitals and health systems.

6. Freeman, L., Schuetz, J. [Producing Affordable Housing in Rising Markets: What Works?](#) Cityscape, vol. 19, no. 1, 2017, pp. 217–36. JSTOR.

The article examines widely used policies that aim to increase the number of below-market – rate housing, including inclusionary zoning (IZ), tax increment financing, and household-based subsidies such as vouchers. The authors conclude that IZ and “fair share” laws have produced relatively small numbers of affordable units, and more effective policies are needed to develop and preserve affordable housing, particularly in high-opportunity neighborhoods.

The authors call for better data on state and local programs to determine why policies only produce a modest amount of affordable housing and how they could be redesigned. A key issue raised is how the government can build support among residents who resist low-cost housing in their neighborhoods. “Efforts that attempt to marry the need for affordable housing with other aspects of human development stand the greatest chance of not only enhancing housing affordability but putting housing assistance recipients in a position to improve their economic standing” such as HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods Initiative.

“In an ideal world, ‘solving’ the affordable housing puzzle would both increase the supply of low-cost housing in high-quality neighborhoods and improve underlying conditions in existing low-income neighborhoods.” Affordable housing alone is not enough to enable disadvantaged households to access new economic opportunities.

7. Yadavalli, A., Rivett, B., Brooks, J., McFarland, C. [A Comprehensive Look at Housing Market Conditions Across America’s Cities](#). Cityscape, vol. 22, no. 2, 2020, pp. 111–32. JSTOR.

This paper identifies six categories of similar market types across 754 cities and applies a policy matrix to present a range of potential policy solutions for the consideration of local officials. The authors point to the importance of understanding the unique aspects of different housing markets to effectively address housing challenges. For instance, slow wage growth, lack of transit options, and lack of access to credit can play a larger role than lack of supply in explaining why families cannot afford housing. A framework for how to understand your housing market is provided.

The analysis shows that cities “tend to cluster together based on how well a city issues permits for single-family and multifamily housing to meet the income levels and job growth opportunities of its residents.” The six types of local housing markets are: high-opportunity cities (Seattle, Gaithersburg, MD), growing cities (Denver CO, Madison WI), rent-burdened cities – are more geographically spread out (New York City, LA, Chicago, Houston, Carson, NV, Revere, MA, Manhattan KS, Conconut Creek FL, multifamily deficit cities (Virginia Beach, Marysville, WA), wealth pocket cities – high gender pay gaps (Newport Beach, Naperville IL), and transit-desiring cities (Cincinnati, Cleveland). Policy solutions presented for rent-burdened cities include: offering tax-exempt municipal bonds, reducing barriers to homeownership, supporting minimum wage increases, investing in shared equity models and community land trusts, prioritizing multifamily permitting, using landlord incentive funds, and providing density bonuses for multifamily housing.

The paper cites a report [Pew](#) showing that the ability of residents to access affordable housing is determined by their demographic characteristics– income, race, age, and educational attainment.

8. Byrne, T.H., Henwood, B.F., & Orlando, A.W. [A rising tide drowns unstable boats: How inequality creates homelessness](#). The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political Science, 693, 28-45. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0002716220981864>

A database containing information about inequality, homelessness, rent burden and housing prices from HUD and the Census Bureau for 239 communities between 2007 and 2018, was constructed to study the relationship of income inequality to homelessness at the community level. The communities are the “Continuums of Care” which are geographic units for which HUD administers federal homeless assistance dollars. The result is a theoretical model providing compelling evidence that income inequality is a structural determinant and significant driver of community-level homelessness as well as renter cost burden. In other

words, the ability of high-income residents to outcompete low-income residents leads to the latter group being excluded from the housing market. The results support policy responses that are city specific and include increasing the minimum wage and public benefit levels including vouchers.

Coinciding with a rise in income inequality in the late 1970's is rising housing costs for homeowners and renters, which is a trend that accelerated at the end of the Great Recession or the financial and foreclosure crisis.

Homelessness is a long-standing issue in the country tracking back to transient workers during the Great Depression, however, contemporary homelessness is said to have emerged as a more recent phenomenon in the 1980s, characterized by people sleeping on sidewalks and in doorways or other public places. Studies looking to explain this have identified structural determinants including post WWII changes in federal housing policy that shifted from production of low-cost units to less generous tenant subsidies which has continued to this day to the extent that 75% of cost-burdened renters do not receive federal assistance. The shift in federal policy also coincided with young African Americans being excluded from the labor market during times of economic recession.

9. [The role of housing policy in causing our nation's racial disparities – and the role it must play in solving them](#). A policy paper from Habitat for Humanity International for all U.S. Habitat for Humanity affiliates, partners and supporters. August 2020.

This report discusses how housing policies, particularly redlining, have perpetuated racial inequities and denied Black families access to credit and homeownership. It highlights the long-term impact on wealth accumulation and access to stable, affordable housing for communities of color.

Specific policy remedies include: increasing opportunities for Black homeownership such as down payment assistance, increasing access to affordable credit for Black homebuyers, investing in affordable homeownership, retargeting the mortgage interest deduction to make it more equitable, invest in distressed, racially segregated communities to promote inclusive recovery, stop perpetuating segregation by increasing opportunities for Black households to rent and purchase homes in communities of opportunity, reform zoning, build and preserve affordable housing, increase mobility of families with housing choice vouchers, invest in affordable rental housing, minimize the damage and compounding effect of COVID-19 for Black households.

10. Butler, A., Carter, K., Lowery, L. [Embedding Racial Equity in Housing](#). National League of Cities. July 2020.

This report explores systemic barriers faced by Black and Latinx communities due to redlining, segregation, and discriminatory lending practices stemming from the New Deal and G.I. Bill. The article provides an estimate from the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#) that 63% of American Indian or Alaska Native households are extremely low-income renters and are

severely cost burdened, and poor housing conditions like low quality and overcrowding are also significant concerns in tribal areas.

Policy proposals to embed racial equity in housing development include – conducting a racial impact study, implementing race-specific, anti-displacement policies, embedding equitable development models in all housing and community development plans, funding equitable housing development, implementing inclusionary zoning, develop and fund shared equity homeownership and comprehensive eviction diversion programs.

11. Mitchell, B., Edlebi, J., Meier, H., Richardson, J., Chen, L. [Decades of Disinvestment: Historic Redlining and Mortgage Lending Since 1981](#). National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC). May 2024.

This in-depth report examines the ongoing impact of redlining on homeownership, wealth gaps, and economic mobility for communities of color, demonstrating how these practices have entrenched racial segregation.

12. Enterprise Community Partners. [The Link Between Historic Redlining and Current Climate Risks](#). August 2021.

This article is part of [Policy Actions for Racial Equity \(PARE\)](#) and provides research connecting formerly redlined neighborhoods with greater climate risks including housing displacement with estimates showing that by 2050 all coastal states are expected to have some portion of affordable housing units exposed to more than one flood risk event per year as nearly 200,000 federally subsidized rental housing units are in floodplains.

Due to discriminatory housing and economic policies, climate change disasters disproportionately affect communities and people of color. For instance, urban heat islands are correlated to redlined neighborhoods which are almost 5 degrees warmer than non-redlined neighborhoods. There are also “striking overlaps between contemporary flood risk maps and New Deal-era maps used by the federal government to assess risks in mortgage lending.”

Enterprises [Building Resilient Futures Initiative](#) sets green building standards for LIHTC properties, including a [Climate Risk Reduction Resource Hub](#) for affordable housing developers, owners, and operators.

13. Kuluski, K., Ho, J., Hans, P., Nelson, M., [Community Care for People with Complex Care Needs: Bridging the Gap between Health and Social Care](#). National Library of Medicine. July 2017.

The context of this study is an expert panel of 24 care providers in health and social care sector across Toronto, Ontario Canada; however, it includes a more global perspective concerning multimorbidity, homecare, transitions, social care, social determinants of health, and integrated care which is comparable to the Washington context.

Homecare services tend to be funded entitlements for nursing care, physical rehabilitation, and activities of daily living (bathing, toileting, personal hygiene) for those who met specific eligibility criteria. Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) such as meal preparation, transportation and paying bills are partially or not subsidized and therefore family and friend support must be relied upon. Patients' needs outside of health care, such as workplace reintegration, obtaining affordable housing, and financial support, are inexplicably tied to individuals' overall health. The paper offers a standard definition for “social care” as services outside of health care and that support IADLs. The absence of social care is linked to increased medical care.

Participants identified three main categories that support people with complex needs – 1) relationships as the Foundation of Care, 2) desired processes and structure for care, and 3) barriers and workarounds for desired care. Under the second category participants emphasized the need to include personal support workers or homecare providers on cross sector teams that also include a nurse, doctor, social worker, and navigator who coordinate care across different settings including hospitals and communities used by the patient.

14. Corinth, K., Irvine, A. JUE Insight: The Effect of Relaxing Local Housing Market Regulations on Federal Rental Assistance Programs. *Journal of Urban Economics*. (2023)

Shows relaxed land use reforms would reduce rents by 2.8% in the Seattle CBSA (King, Snohomish, Pierce).

15. [The State of Homelessness in America. The Council of Economic Advisors](#). September 2019.

Estimates land use changes would reduce rents by 23% in the Seattle MSA (p. 15).

16. Gyourko, J., Krimmel, J. [The Impact of Local Residential Land Use Restrictions on Land Values Across and Within Single Family Housing Markets](#). National Bureau of Economic Research. Working Paper 28993. July 2021.

Estimates the burden of zoning taxes across major US markets. Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle “stand out as being burdened by very large zoning taxes...the absolute value of the tax is \$175,000 per quarter acre of lot at the median [or] \$16.06 per square foot.”

17. Zuk, M., Chapple, K. [Housing Production, Filtering and Displacement: Untangling the Relationships](#). Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies. Research Brief. May 2016.

Estimates the limits of market rate housing production in terms of eventual "filtering down" to prices that are affordable to moderate or low-income populations. Filtering is a term that describes naturally occurring affordable housing, or when older market-rate housing becomes more affordable. It notes this can take generations and there are challenges not normally accounted for such as timing and quality.

The "speed of filtering" has been estimated by other researchers "...on average across the United States, rental units become occupied by lower income households at a rate of approx. 2.2% per year." However, the rate is found to be much lower in stronger housing markets.

Other States

18. Collinson, R., Reed, D. [The Effects of Evictions on Low-Income Households](#). New York University Wagner School of Public Service. December 2018.

Provides casual estimates of the effect of evictions on homelessness, health, employment and earnings and the receipt of public assistance for individuals appearing in court cases in New York City including more than a decade of administrative and outcome data sources such as earnings records. For example, evicted individuals are 16 percentage points more likely to apply to a shelter in the first two years after case filing.

19. Montojo, N., Barton, S., Moore, E. [Opening the Door for Rent Control: Toward a Comprehensive Approach to Protecting California's Renters](#). UC Berkeley Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society. Policy Brief. 2018.

A comprehensive and emerging framework among researchers, community advocates and policymakers studying housing shortages in California is the "five Ps" approach, which builds from three more traditionally referenced principles – protection, production, and preservation, adding power and placement.

The magnitude of the housing shortage, a gap of 1.5 million homes estimated for extremely low and very low-income households and a total projected need of 3.5 million new homes by 2025, means the effort to resolve the crisis is long-term. Statewide measures enacted in 2017 (SB 2, AB 1397) address barriers to market-rate and affordable housing production; however, analysis shows it will take many years for additional production to slow the rate of increasing rents or to make them affordable. To achieve a modest 10 percent reduction in price, housing stock would need to be increased by 20 percent, or 2.8 million additional units.

According to [the Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative](#), people in California who experience housing insecurity are three times more likely to be under frequent mental distress. Seniors, low-income families, people with disabilities and communities of color are disproportionately impacted.

20. Pitts, E. [Utah's housing crossroads: Can affordability be preserved in a growing state?](#) Deseret News. October 30, 2024.

Average home prices have increased by 75% since 2018. An estimated 28,000 homes need to be built annually to meet demand. "Light-touch-density" is a term that means increasing density of single-family lots by allowing 2-8 plexes, townhouses and ADUs. City leaders in South Jordan allowed for "much smaller lots, incredibly higher density, and with the allowance of clustering [six units to one acre]."

21. McKellar, K. [Utah lawmakers' next big housing bill is taking shape. Here's what it includes – so far](#). Standard Examiner. November 23, 2024.

The new bill provides the option for cities and counties to implement a “density overlay” in a “housing eligible zone” of their choice to allow for higher-density housing types in residential areas. The bill also directs the state’s Commission on Housing Affordability to begin preparing a set of “regional strategic plans” to “define success in housing policy for the region” and to set metrics and goals that “address housing shortages and projected population growth” in those areas.

The bill follows an audit that called on lawmakers to create a “statewide strategic housing plan” that noted there is “currently no state-level forecast of housing needs, or efforts to set statewide housing strategy or measure progress toward a common goal.” The bill also endorses looking at policy changes that align with tying land use requirements to project population growth (CA, OR), and upzoning (MN, PA, New Zealand).

22. South Dakota Department of Corrections. [Inmate Work Program. South Dakota Governor’s House Project](#). 2024.

Governor Bill Janklow initiated an affordable house project in 1996, which trains and employs minimum-security inmates as a workforce to meet the demand for low-cost senior housing while teaching a marketable skill that reduces recidivism.

23. North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services. [North Dakota Housing Initiative](#). 2024.

Governor-appointed advisory committee that helps to shape and refine the state’s approach to addressing housing as a workforce issue and includes a statewide housing needs assessment and local housing plans.

Washington State

24. [Housing Underproduction in Washington State](#). ECONorthwest. 2020.

Estimates a reduction in home prices of 4.3% if all units needed are produced over 20 years.

25. [Build, Baby Build. Unlocking 1.4 Million New Homes in Cascadia](#). Cascadia Innovation Corridor. November 2024.

This policy paper puts forward a comprehensive approach to creating 1.4 Million units of affordable housing along major urban centers in the Cascadia corridor, including British Columbia, Oregon and Washington, with a focus on increasing supply by lowering the cost of development, reducing and streamlining permitting, increasing access to land through commercial rezoning, making strategic investments in transit-oriented development, and supporting innovative construction methods and materials such as prefabrication and modular housing and mass timber. The paper puts forward ideas for funding more local

housing development by expanding the use of taxable housing bonds issued by housing authorities and local governments.

26. [Environmental Justice \(EJ\) Council 2025-2027 Biennial Budget Recommendations](#). Adopted by the Council on September 26, 2024.

Proposal for new funding on infrastructure and land reacquisition for Tribal Climate Adaptation and Mitigation to fund activities that support efforts to relocate Indian tribes living in areas of heightened risks due to sea level rise, flooding or other climate change disturbances such as fires.

“As traditional stewards of lands and waters, Indigenous Peoples’ customs, culture, community, and place are all highly impacted by climate change.” A [2024 report by the Northwest Climate Resilience Collaborative](#), “found that persistent funding barriers limit coastal Tribes’ ability to address climate risks, including insufficient funding, rigid rules and qualification criteria, short-term funding cycles, and misalignment between existing funds and Tribal priorities.”

27. [Environmental Justice Task Force. Recommendations for Prioritizing EJ in Washington State Government](#). Report to the Washington State Governor and Legislature. Fall 2020.

The EJTF acknowledges four concurrent global crises: COVID-19, police use of force and racial injustices, climate change, and economic recession. “We know our essential workers who are keeping our economy afloat often come from BIPOC communities, and are also risking their own health as they experience unsafe work environments and overcrowded housing...”

The COVID-19 crisis elevated attention to the inadequacies of housing for farmworkers, who are disproportionately people of color, and a majority are Latinx and may be less willing to raise concerns for their health and safety due to language barriers, overt intimidation, fear of retaliation, and concerns about jeopardizing immigration or their H-2A visa status.

The [Environmental Health Disparities Map](#) was an effort by DOH, Ecology and Puget Sound Clean Air Agency in response to concerns raised during statewide listening sessions in 2017, including “concerns about the presence of air pollution, water and soil contamination, housing, and healthy food access.” Unaffordable housing is a socioeconomic measure included in the map.

[CA Senate Bill 1000](#) is provided as an example for how to incorporate EJ into Washington’s GMA.

Recommendation 12

“I. Build demographic and environmental context to guide and inform place-based activities.

Purpose: Use the WTN, including the EHD map, to learn about the intended audience and community potentially affected by an agency activity or service.

When to implement: As policies, program changes, practice improvements, and facility management decisions are being considered.

Example: In the initial planning stages of community engagement, review the EHD map and its individual measures to learn about a population’s education background, availability of affordable housing, and proximity to sources of pollution. These data can help ensure outreach is accessible and reflects community concerns.

Example: A review of WTN data will also support more comprehensive and inclusive community engagement planning. Specifically, WTN data on preferred languages for non-English speaking populations will help ensure critical information reaches diverse audiences, and that federal compliance obligations for language access are met.”

Recommendations for addressing structural barriers to community engagement – No. 20: “When agency decisions have potential to significantly impact a specific community (as determined by the evaluation described above in recommendation 18), agencies should work with representatives of that community to identify appropriate outreach and communication methods. Significant impact includes potential changes to critical determinants of health such as legal rights, finances, **housing**, and safety. **It is particularly valuable to include community members in oversight, advisory, program planning, and other processes.** Washington’s Department of Health [community health worker program](#) serves as one model .”

Appendix G. Memo: EJ and Reparations from Systemic Racism

“Racial discrimination in New Deal Housing and transportation policy, indigenous land theft, broken treaties, and other forms of institutional (and often unconstitutional) harms shaped these current multigenerational inequalities.”

Provides list of resources to support development of reparations proposals including these with specific references to housing:

- Meg Anderson: [Racist Housing Practices from the 1930’s Linked to Hotter](#)
- Brad Plummer and Nadja Popovich: [Decades of Racism Housing Policy Left](#)
- Supporting research: Hoffman, Shandas, and Pendleton: [The effects of historic housing policies on residents exposure to intra-urban heat: A Study of 108 US Urban Areas](#) (2020)

28. The William D. Ruckelshaus Center. [Pathways to Housing Security. Final Report of Facilitated Discussions and Recommendations.](#) 2023.

Per Section 6 of ESSHB1277, the Report identifies trends and polices that guide the housing and services provided to persons at risk of homelessness, develops options and provides 18 recommendations for a long-term strategy and implementation steps to improve services and outcomes for persons at risk of experiencing homelessness and to develop pathways to permanent housing solutions.

The project is a multiyear effort involving a wide range of participants in interviews and workshops including Tribal governments and Urban Indian Organizations, local governments, service providers, advocates, mental health and substance abuse professionals, business community, legislators, executive branch and gubernatorial appointments. The project incorporated focus work that was done in parallel among those living without a house.

29. [Poverty Reduction Work Group](#)

Established in 2018 to oversee the operation of WorkFirst and TANF to determine evidence-based outcome measures as well as develop strategies to prevent and address adverse childhood experiences and reduce intergenerational poverty. The Task Force serves in an advisory capacity to recommend policy actions to the governor and legislature.

A steering committee of people with lived experience was created to work alongside the Task Force and produced a report -

[Blueprint for a Just and Equitable Future. The 10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty in Washington \(2021\).](#)

Principles were adopted to develop and prioritize recommendations – 1) address root causes and the urgency of now, 2) elevate the expertise and influence of people experiencing poverty, 3) race and social justice at the center, 4) blending evidence, innovation and collaboration, and 4) inspiring hope and building on resilience. Root causes of intergenerational poverty are identified as well as specific U.S. policies affecting poverty outcomes by race and ethnicity.

The Report notes that the Washington state economy would be [\\$40 billion stronger if poverty were reduced and racial disparities in income were eliminated.](#)

30. [Roadmap to Housing Justice](#). Washington Low Income Housing Alliance.

The Roadmap identifies 8 policy changes and investments needed to create housing justice:

1. Fund housing at the scale of need and urgently speed up affordable housing production
2. Stabilize rents statewide for tenants and manufactured home owners.
3. Create equitable access to homeownership – and the wealth it can generate – for Black, Brown, and Indigenous people.
4. Make rules and laws clear and fair so that tenants can have safe, healthy homes, be secure in our homes, and have the freedom to plan for the future.
5. Build a future of racial justice and social equity into housing policies, practices, and investments.
6. Pass policies and invest resources so that people can thrive in place, put down roots, and benefit from economic development and growth in neighborhoods, towns, and cities.
7. Protect people experiencing homelessness until everyone has a home.

8. Prevent homelessness by taking care of our neighbors with good jobs, access to health care, and support in hard times.

31. [Permanent Supportive Housing Learning Collaborative](#). Washington State Department of Commerce. 2024.

The [Research and Data Analysis](#) (RDA) group at the Department of Social and Health Services estimates:

- 84,000 individuals are forecasted to need PSH by June 2025
- SFY 2022, one-third of individuals exiting mental health inpatient settings had a housing need in the year after discharge
- More than half of individuals exiting an inpatient SUD facility had a housing need in the year after discharge
- A third of patients discharged from state psychiatric facilities or community-based settings exited into adult family homes (370).

According to a [presentation by Foundational Community Supports Apple Home and Health](#), health related social needs (HRSN) (previously known as social determinants of health, SDOH) include: food insecurity, housing instability, unemployment, lack of reliable transportation. FCS was launched in 2018 with more than 31,000 individuals enrolled and over 170 providers that include CBOs, health care providers, community behavioral health agencies, LTSS providers, and Tribal providers. FCS has 221 contracted providers across 560 service locations.

32. Petersky, S., Banta-Green, C.J. [“PERCH Study” Results from the 2024 Washington State Permanent Supportive Housing Perceptions and Community Health Survey](#). University of Washington. Addictions, Drug & Alcohol Institute. 2024.

A non-representative survey of people with a history of homelessness and drug use who are currently living in permanent supportive housing explored their experiences, perceptions, the quality of their relationships and current substance use patterns and needs. The top needs reported included: financial, moving to different housing, health care, and employment. Financial insecurity was the number one concern, especially for those on fixed incomes due to age or disability.

Of the thirteen partner sites that participated in the survey, only two had “zero tolerance” policies towards all substance use, which can result in eviction. Other approaches include “don’t ask, don’t tell” and harm reduction, or a combination such as “flexible zero tolerance.”

Rural PSH development faces difficult challenges including: limited social services infrastructure, constraints of federal tax credit programs, higher per-resident costs due to smaller-scale buildings, and competition for funding. Rural and suburban PSH report significantly higher percentages of beds designated for families than urban areas.

The need identified by survey respondents to move to different housing reflects the desire of residents for sufficient support to transition to market-rate or other income-restricted housing. The [Moving On Toolkit](#) provide resources and support for residents who are able and want to move on or move up from supportive housing with a rental subsidy and assistance transitioning to a new apartment. The lack of resident financial resources and availability of Moving On initiatives within PSH means leaving PSH particularly challenging.

33. [Homelessness in Washington](#). 2023 annual report to meet requirements in RCW 43.185C. Washington State Department of Commerce.

This report is a complement to the State of Washington Homeless Housing Crisis Response System Strategic Plan. Overall, there was a 9% increase in homelessness from 2022 to 2023 occurring while housing prices increased significantly. At least 50% of homeless youth in Washington are youth of color with the highest rates occurring among Black and Native young people. “Up to 40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+, while only 3-5% of the United States population identifies as LGBTQ+.”

A graphic explaining the prevention continuum is provided in Figure 1 on page 10.

Additional reporting on homelessness by the Department of Commerce in partnership with the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services’ Research and Data Analysis Division and other state agencies includes [Support Needs of Single Adults Experiencing Homelessness in Washington State](#), and [2021 Homeless Single Adults in Washington](#).

34. Blatchford, T. [Hoping to process evictions quicker, King County adds two judges](#). The Seattle Times. Nov. 29, 2024.

New emergency rule allows landlords to seek a trial more quickly for tenant’s that impact health and safety for other tenants or that increase fire or accident hazards. However, the majority of backlog of cases is for unpaid rent (more than 60%) rather than dangerous behavior (3%). The new judge positions should also help with civil protection orders, with a 28% increase in protection orders filed since 2019.