

# Shelter



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## Overview

Access to safe, stable shelter remains a critical need for vulnerable individuals and families in Bellevue. Rising housing costs and limited affordable rental options have made it difficult for many residents, particularly youth, seniors, immigrants, and families—to find reliable places to stay. Temporary and emergency shelters play a vital role in preventing homelessness, ensuring safety during crises, and connecting residents to long-term services.

## Key Findings & General Trends

- **Regional Trends:**
- Homelessness is increasing across Washington State and the Puget Sound region:
  - Between 2023 and 2024, the total homeless population in Washington grew **12.5%** (from 28,036 to 31,554).
  - **Chronic homelessness increased 56%**, now making up nearly half of all people experiencing homelessness (Axios, 2025).
  - In **King County** over **16,800** individuals were counted in 2024 as living in shelters, vehicles, or outdoors. Overall homelessness has risen **26%**, and chronic homelessness has **increased 78% since 2022**.
- **Homelessness in Bellevue:**
  - A three day count in 2024 identified **123** individuals residing in



68 vehicles in Bellevue. Approximately **38%** were children.

- During the 2024–2025 school year, **651** Bellevue School District students experienced homelessness.

- **Unsheltered and Disparities:**

- In King County, approximately **58%** of the homeless population is unsheltered.
- Racial disparities persist, with **American Indian, Alaska Native, and Indigenous residents** disproportionately impacted.

## Community Voice and Lived Experiences

Survey participants across the region identified **rising rental costs, job loss, and eviction** as top contributors to housing instability.

Shelter intersects with nearly every social determinant of health. Without a safe, stable home, individuals and families face challenges in employment, education, physical health, and social connection. SMEs emphasized:

“A healthy community goes beyond checkbox needs — food, shelter, water, sense of belonging, intellectual and spiritual support.” – SME

This perspective encourages providers and policymakers to build shelter systems that foster belonging, safety, and hope, not just meet minimum requirements.



A consistent theme was the need for universally accessible shelter services.

“There’s many factors that come together to make a truly healthy community... one of the top priorities is accessibility for any resource or service, regardless of a person's gender identity, ethnicity, race, sexuality, employment status, or educational status.” – SME

“What makes a healthy community is a city government that recognizes the needs of its population and shows that it understands what the actual needs are and what the population is.” – SME

Policymaking grounded in both data and lived experience ensures shelter systems include critical supports such as trauma-informed care, legal aid, transportation, and referral pathways.

Ultimately, SMEs called for a shelter system that is a functional and foundational system of safety, inclusion, and dignity. Housing is just the beginning; long-term well-being requires integration with efforts to combat



isolation, remove stigma, and promote opportunity.

Despite Bellevue's resources, many described navigating a system that feels inaccessible, overcrowded, and insufficient. Chronic shortages of beds—especially for families, couples, and individuals with disabilities—remain a major challenge.

“They have to become homeless to get those services.”

– Focus Group Participant

Safe shelter is foundational to community health and individual stability. Without it, residents cannot fully access employment, mental health, education, or food security services. Focus group members tied this need to larger systemic forces—unaffordable housing, low wages, and a fragmented safety net.

*Photo provided by Mary's Place*



## City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

A range of nonprofit agencies across Bellevue and the Eastside provide vital services along the housing continuum, from emergency shelter and transitional housing to permanent housing and supportive services. These programs target populations including youth, families, single adults, and seniors, and offer culturally responsive, trauma-informed care designed to meet immediate needs while fostering long-term housing stability.

### *City of Bellevue Coordinated Response Programs*

**Homelessness Outreach Program** staff engage with a variety of individuals experiencing homelessness in our community. The Homelessness Outreach Program team offers a range of services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Bellevue, including help finding shelter, finding long-term housing, obtaining documentation of identity, finding employment, and connecting to other resources that will help eliminate barriers to stability.

City of Bellevue launched a **Safe Parking Pilot Program** in 2024 providing secure overnight parking, essential amenities, and case management for individuals and families living in vehicles. The program prioritized families with children and supported participants in transitioning to stable housing.

### *Emergency Shelters and Drop-In Services*

Several agencies provide **24/7 emergency shelters, day centers,** and **wraparound support services** for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. These programs typically include meals, case management,





behavioral health support, housing navigation, and access to employment and healthcare resources.

The **Sophia Way** serves women through *Helen's Place*, a low-barrier emergency shelter, and *Sophia's Place*, an extended-stay option.

**PorchLight** supports men with the *Enhanced Men's Shelter*, a comprehensive, low-barrier facility, and the *Rotating Shelter*, which offers overnight stays in partnership with local faith communities for individuals not actively using substances. **Snoqualmie Valley Shelter** assists both individuals and families with low-barrier shelter and access to onsite resources. **Friends of Youth** provides emergency shelter for youth and young adult people, including *Willows Youth Services Center* for ages 18–24 and Youth Haven for ages 7–17.

*Photo provided by The Sophia Way*



Families with children can access support through **New Bethlehem Shelter** and **Mary's Place**, both of which operate full-service shelters and day centers, while **Hopelink's Family Shelter** offers apartment-style housing with integrated case management and supportive services.

### *Transitional Housing Programs*

Transitional housing offers a bridge to stability for individuals exiting homelessness. **Friends of Youth** runs *Transitional Living Programs* for young adults, providing safe housing and support as they work toward independence. **Hopelink** provides transitional housing for families with children, using a trauma-informed care model that supports the whole family. **MAPS - MCRC** offers *Transitional Housing for Single Women*, creating a supportive environment that addresses the unique needs of women in crisis.

### *Housing Navigation, Outreach, and Emergency Support*

Several agencies enhance housing access and crisis response through targeted outreach and navigation services. **PorchLight** offers an outreach program that engages unsheltered men, women, and families to connect them with shelter, health, and housing resources. Meanwhile, **4 Tomorrow** offers a flexible and responsive *Emergency Temporary Housing & Homelessness Recovery Program*, which funds short-term hotel or motel stays and provides case management to help individuals and families access long-term housing solutions. **Mary's Place** offers *A Place to Call Home Program*, which provides outreach, connection to shelter resources, and direct client assistance to unsheltered families.





## *Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024*

- **394,423** shelter bed nights.
- **41,055** Day Center visits.
- **15,007** hours of street, shelter, and housing case management.
- **551** people accepted services from the COB outreach team.
- **109 unduplicated individuals secured housing** in the same period.
- **57** households have been served through the city's Safe Parking program.

This integrated overview highlights the depth and coordination of shelter and housing services available throughout Bellevue and the Eastside. Together, these programs form a safety net and launchpad, helping vulnerable community members move from crisis toward stability and self-sufficiency.

