

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Health through Housing

**Q: How is Health through Housing funded?**

A: The State Legislature passed House Bill 1590 in 2020, which allowed jurisdictions to enact a 0.1% sales tax to finance construction of affordable housing and behavioral health facilities and operations or services at affordable housing. In 2020, Executive Constantine proposed and the County Council approved this dedicated sales tax. In 2021, the State Legislature passed House Bill 1070, which clarified acquisition of property as an eligible use of these funds.

**Q: What is the goal?**

A: The County's goal is to partner with local cities to create 1,600 units to house people experiencing or on the edge of chronic homelessness. Within this goal is a commitment to addressing the serious racial-ethnic disproportionality of homelessness.

**Q: Why is this focused on people experiencing chronic homelessness?**

A: People experiencing chronic homelessness have the greatest barriers to housing. They have little or no income, by definition have at least one disability, and have lived the longest without housing. Many have health and behavioral health issues that make housing stability a challenge. The comprehensive services available onsite make this an ideal home for these individuals.

**Q: How long will the Health through Housing program last?**

A: The program and the tax that supports it have no end date. It will be governed by the *Health through Housing Implementation Plan* upon adoption by ordinance by the County Council in 2021. In 2028 and every eight years after that, the executive will propose an update to the *Health through Housing Implementation Plan*.

**Q: How many cities may/will be involved?**

A: It is unknown at this time how many cities will choose to partner with King County and host a Health through Housing site.

**Q: What will be the measure(s) of success?**

A: Successfully moving individuals out of homelessness into stable housing. Specific measures will be proposed in the *Health through Housing Implementation Plan*, due to the County Council and the Regional Policy Committee on August 30, 2021.

**Q: How many facilities will be involved?**

A: The County estimates about 16 buildings will be needed to achieve 1,600 units.

**Q: Where will they be located?**

A: King County is committed to working with individual cities throughout the county to find potential buildings to address the crisis of homelessness region-wide. Hotels with access to transit or other community services are strongly preferred.

**Q: Who qualifies for Health through Housing?**

A: Individuals or households served with these funds must earn at or below 30% of Area Median Income and meet the following qualifications, per the authorizing state statute:

- Persons with behavioral health disabilities
- Veterans
- Senior citizens
- Persons with disabilities
- Domestic violence survivors
- Persons who are homeless or at-risk of being homeless, including families with children
- Unaccompanied homeless youth or young adults.

Per County ordinance, households also must either be chronically homeless or at-risk of being chronically homeless and meet one of the following definitions:

- A household experiencing chronic homelessness must include an adult with a disability and either be currently experiencing homelessness for at least 12 consecutive months or have experienced homelessness for 12 months within the prior three years.
- A household at-risk of homelessness describes a household that includes an adult with a disability and meets two additional criteria:
  1. Currently experiencing homelessness for 10-12 months in the previous three years or previously experiencing homelessness for 12+ months within the last five years; and
  2. Include one adult that has been incarcerated within the previous five years, or been detained or involuntarily committed, or identifies as a member of a population demographically overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness.

***Q: Are there maximum income limits to qualify?***

A: Yes. All households served with these funds must earn at or below 30% of Area Median Income and meet certain other qualifications (above).

***Q: Will there be rules for behavior for residents?***

A: Rules may vary by provider, but in general, permanent supportive housing (and emergency housing) sites have a code of conduct that is agreed upon at the time of entry. These cover expectations for things such as visitors, interpersonal behavior, etc. If residents are not able to comply with the code of conduct and the terms of the agreement, they may be asked to leave. The rules are balanced with the recognition that people experiencing chronic homelessness will often require support as they transition into housing. The goal is to provide emergency housing for people who might otherwise live unsheltered.

***Q: Should city residents be prioritized?***

A: An amendment to HB 1070, which will give the County authority to use these funds for acquisition of existing buildings, requires that " ...a county that acquires a facility under [this statute] must provide an opportunity for 15 percent of the units provided at that facility to be provided to individuals who are living in or near the city in which the facility is located, or have ties to that community. The provisions of this subsection do not apply if the county is unable to identify sufficient individuals within the city in need of services that meet the criteria..." This

prioritization must not jeopardize United States Department of Housing and Urban Development funding for the continuum of care program.”

***Q: How long can a resident stay?***

A: Health Through Housing is a housing program. There is no limit on length of stay. However, when appropriate, housing case managers may work with residents on securing alternate, long-term housing appropriate to the individual’s needs. Because these residents have some type of disability, many if not most will need long-term housing subsidies and services to maintain housing stability.

***Q: If the goal is to help people transition into stability, what is the pathway to this goal?***

A: Housing stability is defined as not returning to homelessness. Therefore, if households move from chronic homelessness into Health through Housing buildings, the program will have achieved success for that household. As noted above, case managers will work with residents who want to move on to another type of supportive housing once they have achieved improved health and stability in the HtH site. An example might be a person who stabilizes in a HtH hotel who wants to move to an apartment with a kitchen.

***Q: Will drug and/or alcohol use be permitted in the individual units?***

A: Providers will use a harm reduction approach, within which drug and/or alcohol use will be permitted in individual units. Staff will provide supportive services to promote housing stability and will work with residents that have substance use disorders in-house and also connect them to resources in the community. Staff working in a harm reduction setting work in partnership with tenants, and are expected to respond directly to unacceptable behaviors, whether or not the behaviors are related to substance use.

***Q: How many people will be housed at the new Renton location?***

A: At least 100 people will live in the former hotel, but no more than 115.

***Q: Will the hotels have 24/7 staffing?***

A: All Health through Housing facilities will have 24/7 building staffing, including:

- Case managers
- Housing navigators
- Connection to health and behavioral health services
- Assistance in enrolling in entitlement programs and employment programs where appropriate.

***Q: Who will provide these services?***

A: Onsite services will be provided by non-profit organizations with expertise in providing permanent supportive housing and serving diverse populations disproportionately experiencing homelessness. The County used a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to identify potential service providers. The County will work with the local jurisdiction to select the service provider for this location via a competitive process.

***Q: Will there be security?***

A: All Health through Housing sites will have 24/7 onsite staffing. Permanent supportive housing does not typically have paid security on site, but does have staff awake and on duty around the clock.

***Q: Will residents have restrictions on access to come and go from the facility?***

A: No. This will be their home and they will come and go as anyone would from their own home.

***Q: What will be enforcement strategies from illegal activities in units or in/on the surrounding premises?***

A: Permanent supportive housing (and emergency housing) programs have rules of conduct and tenants agree to those rules when they move in. Those that cannot abide by those rules will be asked to leave and will lose their apartment.

***Q: Will there be volunteer opportunities for community members who want to help?***

A: The County anticipates many service providers will welcome this opportunity.