

1. Bartholomew, Kathryn E.

January 19, 2021 at 10:54:00 AM

Highlight each agency name with link to their home page?

2. Sundin, Tara J.

January 19, 2021 at 9:40:00 AM

This study was flawed - they forgot to count an entire dorm at the LMM for instance.

Bartholomew, Kathryn E.

January 19, 2021 at 9:56:00 AM

The point still stands that there has not been a dramatic increase in the total homeless population in Whatcom/Bellingham over the past few years, as many people might assume. Maybe we could use a stat from the HSC?

Why are there so many homeless people in Bellingham?

- Despite the many factors unique to each individual's situation, the major driver of homelessness in our region is the cost of housing. Quite simply, as rents increase, so do the number of people living in shelters and outdoors.
- Although it is difficult to see any of our neighbors sleeping outside, the truth is that most people who experience homelessness are not living on the streets or in encampments. In fact, 69% of persons who are counted as homeless were sleeping indoors in shelter or temporary housing in 2020. This is good news – it means that the majority of people who face homelessness do seek and receive help from one our many community partners.

What is the City doing to help the homeless?

- We are doing more than ever. In total, the City spends approximately \$5 million per years on contracts with partners who provide services to help either prevent or respond to homelessness. The Whatcom County Health Department contributes an equivalent amount each year, for a total of about \$10 million per year county-wide. The City and County are working simultaneously to provide permanent housing solutions, respond to the need for emergency shelter, and address the root causes of homelessness. For more information about our efforts to address and prevent homelessness, visit www.cob.org/stateofhousing.
- It is important to recognize that the City does not work alone. Through our local [Housing Levy](#), General Fund, and HUD grants, the City funds over a dozen local housing and human services non-profits, including the [Opportunity Council](#), [Lydia Place](#), [Northwest Youth Services](#), [Sun Community Services](#), [Catholic Community Services](#), [YWCA](#), [Interfaith Coalition](#), [Mercy Housing Northwest](#) and [Sean Humphrey House](#). With the support of City and County funding, the [Homeless Service Center](#) helps over 3,000 people each year with things like emergency rental assistance, case management, motel vouchers, and other kinds of support.
- In response to pressure from homeless advocates and the public to provide more immediate shelter options, the City opened Swift Haven, a tiny home village at the Civic Athletic complex. This new 25-unit site is operated by HomesNow and will remain at its present location until the spring.
- And we are working to build even more capacity! In November 2020 the City issued a [request for qualifications](#) for a qualified partner agency that could operate a longer-term tiny home village on City property. The winning applicant was selected in December, and the City is looking forward to announcing this partnership very soon.

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If we are doing so much, why is the problem getting worse?

- Unfortunately, even with our increased resources and attention to this issue, there are not enough resources to meet the total need. As a result, our system prioritizes the most vulnerable first: families with children, seniors, and medically fragile individuals may receive immediate assistance while others must wait longer for help.

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3. Sundin, Tara J.

January 19, 2021 at 9:42:00 AM

The Mayor's office can if we want to keep this in.

- Another important factor is personal choice. Even if there are enough warm shelter beds available for anyone who wants one on a given night, some people might choose not to take them. We recognize that there are many reasons why a family or individual may want to avoid a congregate shelter. Some are couples who want to remain together, individuals concerned about their exposure to COVID-19, and also those whose mental health or addiction makes it very difficult to function in a large group setting. Providing enough shelter that is suitable and acceptable for everyone who needs it is a difficult problem that all communities are wrestling with.

Then why are people allowed to illegally camp on the City Hall lawn?

- **Does someone else want to take this one?**

Why can't you just open a building or other public space and allow people to stay there?

- Because we lack the human resources to operate such a space. If the City is going to provide a location for people to stay, it must be safe; there must be protocols in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and to ensure the personal safety of anyone staying there. A group of dedicated volunteers is not enough. Without experienced staff who have a great deal of training to work with people who have a broad range of disabilities (addiction, PTSD, mental health issues, etc.), such a situation could quickly become unsafe.

Is Camp 210 on the City Hall lawn safe?

- No. Since the occupied protest began on City Hall's lawn, there have been numerous incidents and safety issues. Among them, 26 have been noted by Bellingham Police Department as "significant," including Disorderly Conduct, Fight, Felony Assault, Sexual Assault, Drug Investigation, Harassment, and Hazards. (Additional information about police activity can be found [here](#)). This is why, in addition to committed volunteers, professional staff and enforcement of rules are critical to operate a safe encampment.

Can you hire more social workers or another agency to come offer services?

- None of the qualified agencies we work with have the staff or capacity available to take on supervision of a new site at this time. Before the encampment opened on City Hall lawn, the City had already issued a request for qualifications to recruit a qualified agency to open an additional tiny house village in order to offer more options to couples and individuals who are homeless. That process is still going forward.

What are the City and County doing to provide more shelter during the pandemic?

- The City and County took significant steps to ensure that there would be enough shelter space available, even with the additional space requirements dictated by Covid-19 precautions. Most notably, the City and County partnered with the Lighthouse Mission Ministries to find a new location for their emergency drop-in center, which could provide 6-foot distancing. The new Base Camp location was opened in July 2020, with space for

nearly 200 individuals, plus meals, showers, laundry facilities, and other services. More information about Base Camp can be found here: ([link to Base Camp FAQs or webpage?](#))

- The City and County partnered to lease the former Motel 6 on Byron Avenue, and convert it to a 58-room facility for anyone in the community exposed to Covid-19 who did not have a safe place to isolate or quarantine. This site provides meals and connects guests with healthcare services during their stay.
- The City increased our funding for motel vouchers, which are administered by the Opportunity Council. Families with children, seniors, and other medically fragile adults are prioritized.

Why weren't you more prepared for this coming winter?

- We were prepared. Recent efforts increased the community's shelter capacity by over 30% compared to last winter. Based on last year's peak shelter occupancy, it was predicted that the amount of emergency shelter space would be adequate to get us through this winter while we work on more longer-term housing solutions.
- The Lighthouse Mission Ministries worked with other community partners and volunteers to prepare an overflow shelter location, to house an additional 39 adults, should the Base Camp reach capacity this winter. The overflow shelter has not been activated to date because there has been ample space at Base Camp each night ever since the encampment began on the City Hall lawn. In other words, many people who were sleeping indoors have chosen to camp outside of City Hall instead. Volunteers and staff are fully prepared and ready to open if or when Base Camp reaches capacity.

Are the campers at City Hall allowed to return to Base Camp?

- Yes. Anyone who wants to access Base Camp's services can either call ahead or walk up to be screened for symptoms and take a rapid Covid-19 antigen test.
- Those who currently have a restriction on their entry because of prior behaviors can call ahead or come in person to set up an appointment to make a plan with staff to re-enter and receive services.
- The only individuals who may be excluded from Base Camp are registered sex offenders, or those if they have engaged predatory behavior like selling drugs or the sexual exploitation of individuals while at Base Camp.

How can I help?

- We are all fortunate to live in such a caring and compassionate community. Many of our local partner agencies continue to work tirelessly to help those who are facing homelessness and would greatly appreciate your support.
- Volunteers will be needed in order to operate the winter overflow shelter should the Base Camp reach capacity: <https://ctkserves.org/volunteer>
- Donate to Lydia Place or the Opportunity Council to help pay for more motel stays: <https://lydiaplace.org/donate/> or <https://www.oppco.org/donation-information/>

- Contact the Volunteer Center of Whatcom County to learn about more ways you can offer your time: [The Volunteer Center of Whatcom County – The Volunteer Center of Whatcom County \(whatcomvolunteer.org\)](http://www.whatcomvolunteer.org).