



HomesNOW! Not Later.

HomesNOW! – General Plan

HomesNOW! Strategy:

The goal of **HomesNOW!** is to take homeless people from the street and house them immediately.

It sounds simple, that's because it is. We are focused on going from point A to Point B.

We are not going to wait until all the stars line up in order to get started, we are working on it NOW.

1. We are 100% funded by donations and run by volunteers with the goal of providing homes to the homeless as efficiently as possible.

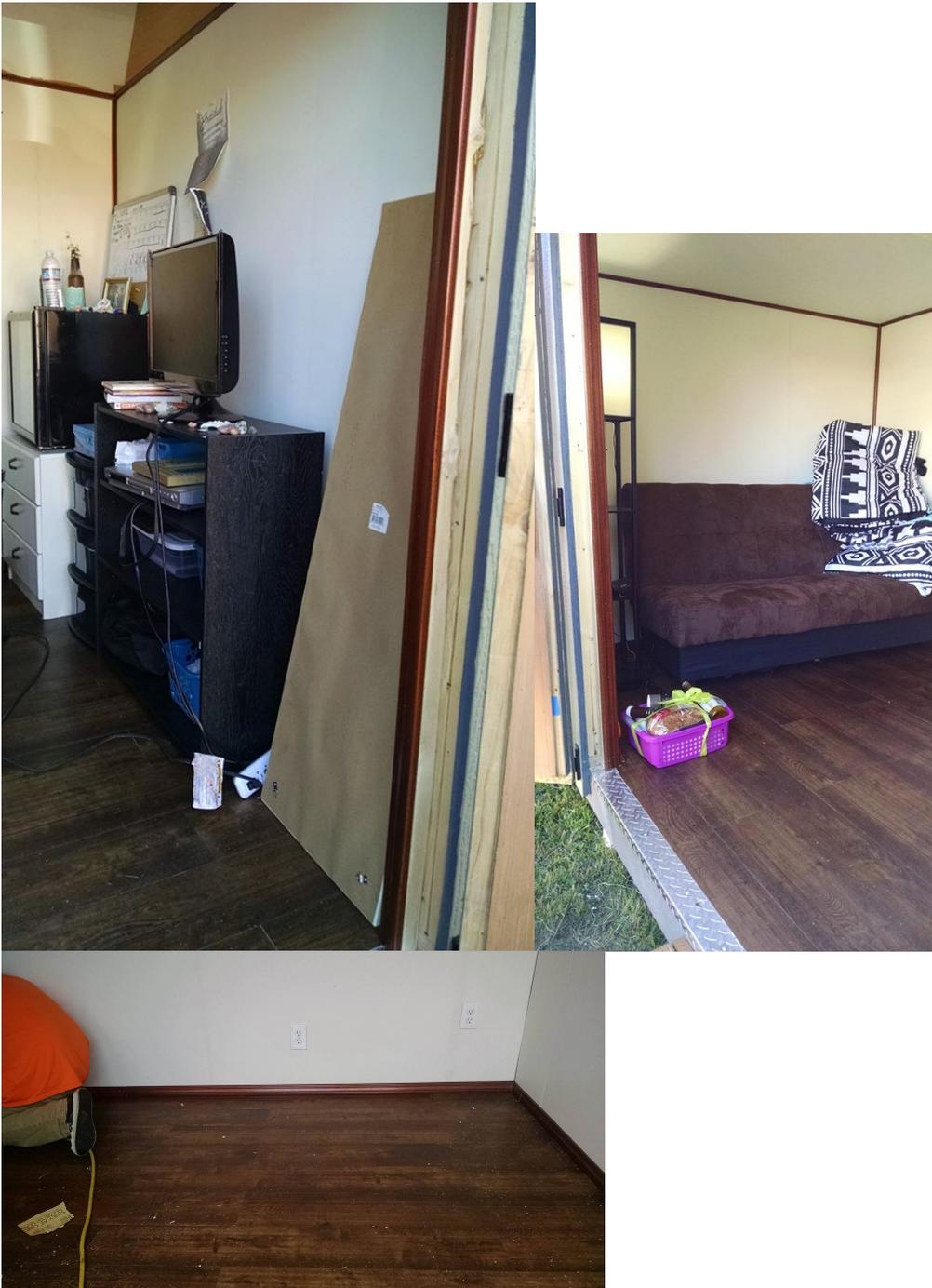
2. We are committed to keeping administrative costs at no more than 5% of operating expenses. That means that 95% goes to housing the homeless.

3. We are focused on housing homeless people in a way that is faster, more cost-effective, and more humane than traditional methods. We want the person to have a sense of home, not just a temporary shelter.

4. We plan on buying lots and boarded up buildings in Whatcom County to Start and empowering the homeless to do the work necessary to make the homes livable again where they will be living.



We also plan on buying lots to place tiny homes on (8' x 10', 10' x 10', 12' x 12', and 10' x 20' structures, custom sizes possible as well). HomesNOW! already have our first land available for 2 homes, which have already been built in less than a month. We've been able to get the build cost of a basic 8' x 10' structure with full electrical and like the inside of a normal bedroom for around \$3500. Examples pictured below:



It's a very simple approach and is not complicated. We find land or we find a boarded-up home and fix it up, and attach smaller homes to the main home. It's more cost effective because the money goes directly to the need, it's more humane because it feels like a home which helps the individual stabilize, and seeing real progress and results takes days/weeks, not years/decades. **Our goal is to put ourselves out of the job by resolving the homeless situation in Whatcom County and beyond.**

Track Record:

Even though HomesNOW! is new, we have already seen some of our first successes. **We have housed two homeless people so far in 1 month's time.** Our next two projects will be refurbishing a boarded-up home (Nicknamed **"Trump Tower"**, pictured below) and also building a mini-home with full water and sewer, in addition to electric at the same time.

Trump Tower, home refurbishment example:



What We Need – Short Term:

What we need is to raise money for the next few homes. **We need about \$3500 per home on average**, not much when you consider that this is going to take people off the streets and reduce the number of homeless in Whatcom County. This will also provide a useful case study to illustrate the success of our strategy.

If you want to help turn this into a reality, we need your help. Also, please consider that We are a 501c3 Non-Profit Organization, **so your donations are tax deductible.**

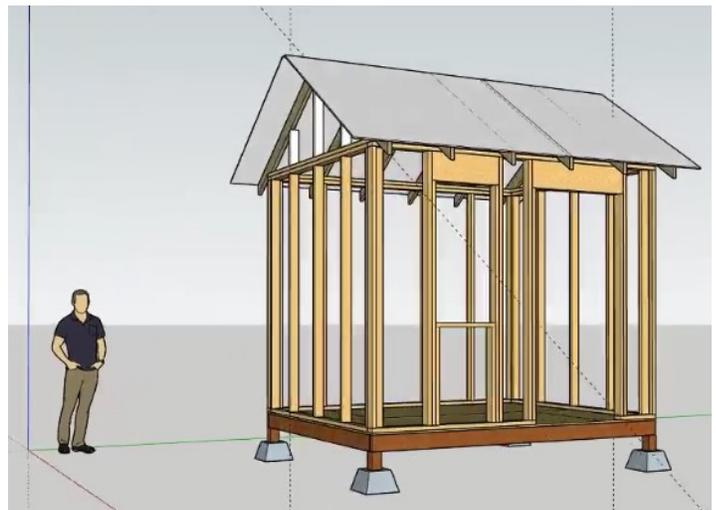
What We Need – Long Term:

Long term we are going to need more donations in order to build more tiny homes and supportive facilities. **We will also need LAND where people would be willing to have these tiny homes on their lot, or be willing to let HomesNOW! use their land for solving the homeless problem.**

What we Need – Supplies:

Supply List for Home Model 1-A (8' x 10' – Estimated Cost \$3500)

Item	Length	Quantity
2x6 PT	8'	6
2x6 PT	10'	2
2x4 studs	92 5/8"	35
T 1-11	4'x8'	11
¾ floor sheet	4x8	3
2x4 plate	10'	6
2x4 plate	8'	6
2x6 primed	12'	4
7/16 osb	4x8	8
1x3 primed	16'	4
2x6 lineal	12'	7
roofing		5 bundles
paint		
pier pads		4
Door (2x4wall)		
nails		
screws		
Drywall		
Romex Wiring		



Our Model:

As much as possible, HomesNOW! aims to empower the homeless to help themselves and thus transition to regular housing over time. Many non-profit organizations that are trying to tackle this problem think that there's a "one size fits all" solution to this problem. These organizations have often designed full communities and villages specifically for the homeless with rigid rules and procedures for maintaining housing. We think there's definitely an opening for homeless communities, however when looking at the reasons for homelessness, the reasons are quite varied and this model of massive homeless community would not be ideal for every homeless person.

This means that some people who are homeless would benefit from living in a homeless community, others would benefit from living in homes which are scattered throughout the local community, attached to existing larger homes which act as homeless shelters. For example, if there were families that were homeless, it would be better if they lived in a larger house with multiple bedrooms because the mini-homes are only about the size of a bedroom.

HomesNOW! is focused primarily on the housing side of things. As far as picking who goes into the mini-homes, we are linking up with local groups like Stepping Stones on Lummi Nation, who have the resources to be able to handle the support services side of things and help the residents manage the homes.

Once residents begin to stabilize they typically begin paying a low rent (perhaps \$150-250/mo depending on the individual), this rent would be used to cover costs and maintenance for the homes after they are initially built such as electric bill, water, sewer, garbage etc.

They also would not be required to pay it right away, only once they start working and getting back on their feet. This is done at cost, non-profit. This also gets people started with transitioning to normal housing and paying bills like a typical housed individual.

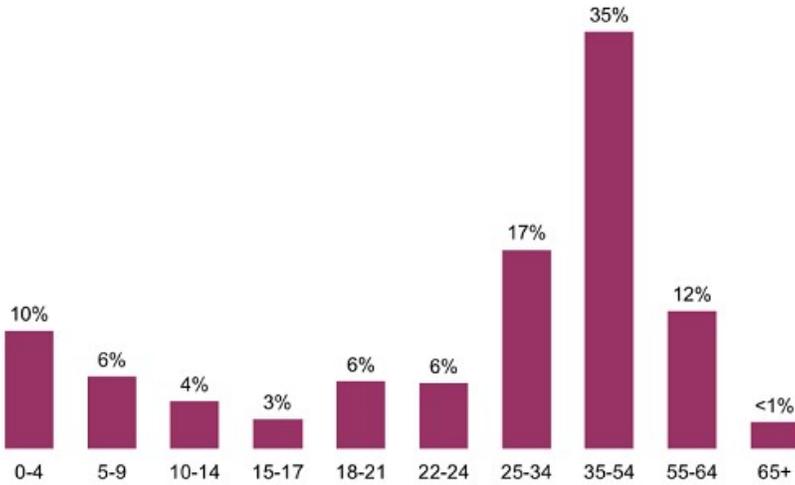
We will not have strict time limits on the length of stay, it will depend on the individual, but one requirement is that they are actively working toward independence and self-sufficiency. We plan to have different housing models for different homeless needs. For example, some people are homeless only because of financial reasons. They would be in a different situation than a homeless person who has a mental illness, or a drug addiction, or a physical disability. Each type of situation requires a different model in terms of support services. It costs less than a one size fits all solution as well because each condition caused by homelessness can be efficiently and surgically treated instead of spending money, applying the incorrect solution, and then having to apply it over and over again, thus wasting money. We have proven that our model works on a small scale and we are looking for partnerships and a helping hand with private donors, the city, the county and the state. We need your help to solve this problem faster.

The Numbers – Whatcom County:

According to **Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness**, homeless individuals were almost evenly split between those who identified as males (51%) and those who identified as females (47%).

The chart below shows the age distribution of homeless individuals in Whatcom County during the annual homeless census of 2016. Total age range was from less than one year old to 77 years old.

Age Distribution of All Homeless Persons (2016)

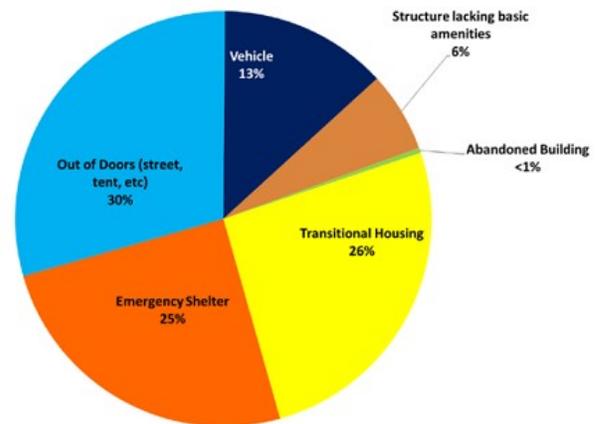


Almost half (48%) of unaccompanied homeless persons were in the 35-54 age range. The median age of all homeless individuals was 34 years old.

However, a significant number of homeless children were also counted in the census. 16% of all homeless persons this year were children under 10 years old, and 23% were under 18 years old. Additionally, seven unaccompanied minors were encountered during the count in 2016.

In 2016, around half (49%) of homeless households were unsheltered. They stayed the night in the **outdoors** (30%), in a **vehicle** (13%), in a **structure lacking basic amenities** (6%), or in an **abandoned building** (<1%).

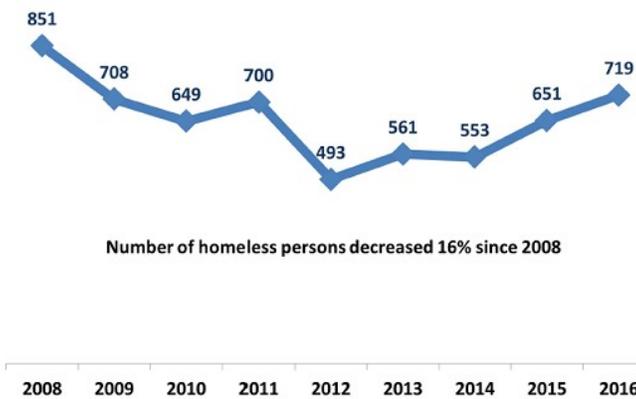
Source of household's shelter the night before the homeless count (2016) (N=497)



The total number of reported homeless in Whatcom County has decreased 16% since 2008, but it is back on the rise again since 2014.

Despite millions of dollars and thousands of outreach

Whatcom County Annual Homeless Census 2008-2016



programs, the number of homeless people in Whatcom County continues to climb. The current complicated and expensive strategies to deal with homelessness don't seem to be providing the value that was promised by other programs.

The number of homeless veterans has also doubled in Whatcom County since 2014. It's still 29% lower than it was in 2008, but is quickly rising again.

Ending homelessness in Whatcom County is an achievable goal. It can be accomplished in a reasonably affordable way with even a modest community investment.

The Numbers – Incarceration

Of the 328 people in the jail as of July 11th, 52 people had no permanent address when they were locked up.

This number does not include those who may have been couch surfing or “near-homeless”, this is the safe number of homeless you can say for sure are in the jail. That means **16% of the population in the jail were homeless when they were locked up**. Often these are for non-violent crimes like urinating in public, drinking in public, smoking in public, loitering...But when you are homeless you end up doing all of that on the street instead of in the privacy of your own home.

The Numbers – Wasteful Spending / Unnecessary Costs

1. Cost of breaking up homeless camps in Bellingham - \$300,000 – \$400,000 per year.

Breaking up homeless camps without anywhere for people to go is cruel and increases crime in the local area, the reason for this is because when somebody who is barely surviving has their stuff taken away, they are more likely to steal or gather the supplies they need for something else. Breaking up 15 homeless camps a week means that people are simply setting up new camps. This means you have a high redundant cost that keeps popping up every year.

VIABLE ALTERNATIVE:

Set up a dumpster and porta-potties near the camps, and let the homeless clean it up for themselves, if they can keep the camp safe and clean they should be allowed to stay and the city could reduce the amount of trash that ends up in the streets, and decrease crime. This is also a very low-cost stopgap option. Lease out land to groups who want to refurbish broken properties and turn them into viable housing again. This will also reduce the number of homeless and will reduce crime.

2. Cost of holding each inmate per year on average in State Jail - \$20,000 - \$40,000 per year

The cost to house each inmate per year pays about as much as a full-time job above the poverty line. This is a huge financial drain on the city. Many people who are in the jail are there because of nonviolent crimes and are not able to afford bail. Also if somebody has a job and they are brought to the jail and are held there because they can't afford bail, they will lose their job while in Jail, which sets them up for failure once they finally get out.

VIABLE ALTERNATIVE:

Set up job placement programs, mental health counselling, drug and alcohol treatment but outside the jail, this will offer the homeless an alternative to being locked up and reduce the overall population in the jail. It will also allow those who need help to not have to lose their job or be locked up to get help. It also costs significantly less. The money saved can be spent on something more productive.

3. Cost of building a new jail over 10 years – \$ 450 million - 1.1 billion dollars

Depending on which measuring index is used, building a new jail will cost anywhere from 450 million to 1.1 billion over the next 30 years. Building a new jail will be a great cost to the community and will increase the number of people who are homeless, because it will be a black hole in the budget and there will be decreased funding for other programs as a result. Also, there will be pressure to lock up more people to fill the empty beds at the jail.

VIABLE ALTERNATIVE:

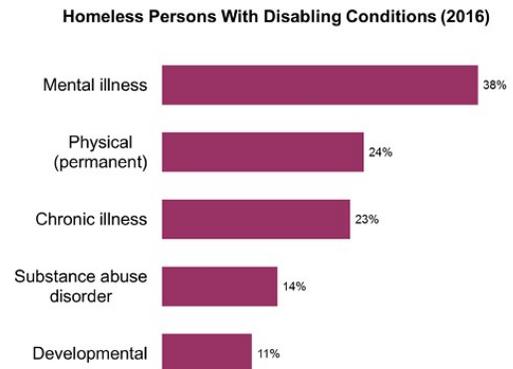
Instead spend the money on building mental health counselling facilities and staff, drug counselling facilities and staff, public non-profit housing, job placement programs, alternatives to incarceration for non-violent crimes.

Homeless survey respondents were asked to list which of five disabilities applied to each member of their household. **The most prevalent disabling condition was mental illness (38%).**

It should be emphasized that this data is based on self-reporting. Due to the stigma of mental illness and substance abuse, these conditions are almost certainly under-reported.

To address the concern of available support services, HomesNOW! will be working with other groups who are focused specifically on support services such as mental health counselling and drug treatment to provide those services on-site or as near as possible to those in need.

This will allow HomesNOW! to surgically focus on building the homes and getting people off the streets, which as a result will help stabilize the situation for a homeless individual, thus making recovery easier when they are receiving support services.



HomesNOW! Not Later: General Home Policies

Liability and Insurance:

HomesNOW! would be responsible for providing insurance for any property that HomesNOW manages. A local Farmers Insurance agency is willing to insure our homes. HomesNOW! will assume full responsibility for managing which residents are in the homes to reduce liability.

Employment and/or Income:

The first residents for our homes will be individuals who are homeless but have some income, either through full-time or part-time employment or through Social Security/disability payments or Veteran's benefits. Many of the homeless are hardworking and just need a hand up and a little help because they can't afford rent at current market values for rent in Bellingham. HomesNOW! is aware of the level of funding needed to house people who are without work or without income and need long-term support, and that is why as a first step, we are seeking homeless who are employed or have income coming in to make this self-sustaining in the long-run without relying solely on charity or donations. We have 5 people on our waiting list already who have jobs or income who can be helped immediately.

Long-term though, to help those in need who are also unemployed, HomesNOW! plans to open a non-profit thrift shop at a nearby location where goods, furniture and supplies can be donated, organized, stored and sold to fund operations and future home development for those in need. This shop will be used to employ future residents who are unemployed, to help them get on their feet. Minimum wage will be \$15-20/hr (part time or full time) depending on the level of experience of a homeless individual who needs work. This is done to empower the homeless to become self-sufficient and independent.

Bills and Rental Costs:

Bills will be paid for on the property through rent, which will be charged on a non-profit basis. This rent will keep initial costs low for start-up to get people housed. **Rent will be based on ability to pay, and will be 30% of their income or \$250/mo, whichever number is lower.** This rent will be used to pay all bills for the house such as electrical, water/sewer, garbage, internet as well as supplies for the home such as toilet paper, soap and other household products. Also, utilities are included in this rent, so the percentage is effectively lower than the industry standard of 30%. This model is being used for 2 reasons.

One reason is that we will be able to self-sustain and self-fund operations and maintenance without relying solely on donations, the other is that residents will transition to regular housing easier since it will be similar to the model they will encounter once they no longer need housing assistance from HomesNOW.

The long-term goal is to get residents transitioned to regular housing within a few months to make room for more people who need help. Over time this will reduce the number of people who are homeless on a continuous basis.

Home Repairs:

HomesNOW! would take responsibility for any repairs for the homes or structures we take responsibility for. The repairs would be paid for through donations and reserve funds. The labor to do any needed repairs on the structure would be volunteer labor. This would also provide an opportunity to empower residents to learn a skilled trade through volunteering with a skilled professional in the areas such as Information Technology, Carpentry, Construction, Plumbing and Electrical. HomesNOW! will have our homes inspected and certified to ensure that the structure or structures are up to code and safety regulations.

Security:

Our homes will be under 24/7 surveillance. 720P HD Security cameras will be placed around the perimeter of the house or houses and will monitor all activity happening outside the houses/structures. This is done to protect both the residents and the neighbors from any potential problems that could arise (legally or otherwise). Location will also be able to be monitored remotely through an app on the phone and PC. Security Cameras will not be installed inside the house, to preserve the privacy of the residents in their own bedrooms.

Support Services:

HomesNOW! wants to set up each resident with a case worker to determine which specific areas of help that the resident would benefit from. Some residents might require job training, others might require mental health counselling or drug/alcohol treatment. The case worker/social worker will decide which support services a resident will need (if any) based on evaluating each individual, while helping them in a surgical way based on their individual needs to empower them to get back on their feet to become independent.

Behavioral Health Access Program case management services will provide support services for our residents.

Home Management (Daily Life):

HomesNOW! will have weekly group house meetings with all the residents and at least one member of the board from HomesNOW. One of our residents will be designated as home manager and will be a line of communication between the HomesNOW members and residents to ensure smooth and effective operations

and management of the home. All residents must be approved by management and go through the application process. Every resident will take turns cleaning the house (dishes, bathrooms, rooms, living room, etc.). All residents must be engaged in services where necessary and pay rent. Residents will not be permitted consume any controlled substances which are illegal under Washington State Law or if case worker determines substance abuse treatment is necessary (for legal substances). Drug testing will be required by request of HomesNOW. Residents will not be drug tested unless there is suspicion of consuming an illegal controlled substance through secondary signs such as erratic behavior, mood swings, increase in mental instability, anger management issues or other reasonable concerns that would warrant a drug test.

How HomesNOW! Started:

A Dream Becoming a Reality,

Jim Peterson (formerly homeless for 17 years from 1973-1990) had a dream since 1993 to start solving homelessness, one person at a time.

Jim Peterson presented this plan to the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1994 and they told him that the plan was too simple and would never work.

Jim never gave up on that dream. Jim Peterson and Doug Gustafson started HomesNOW! to finally implement that dream. HomesNOW! Has obtained 501c3 status and we have received our certificate of incorporation.



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Sources:

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3. Is it hard to solve Whatcom County's homelessness? This new nonprofit doesn't think so <http://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article156815819.htm>
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