



# WINTER SHELTER IN EAST KING COUNTY

## Vision Statement

Every person in East King County has the opportunity to live in a safe, affordable, healthy home.

## Value Statement

Homelessness is an experience that individuals and families may face for a variety of reasons. The reality of homelessness is extremely challenging for those experiencing it, and it can also present challenges for the community at large. Therefore, we must work together as a whole community-- across sectors and geographic boundaries-- to find solutions that are effective for those experiencing homelessness and that allow our communities to continue to thrive.

## Specific Goal for Winter Shelter

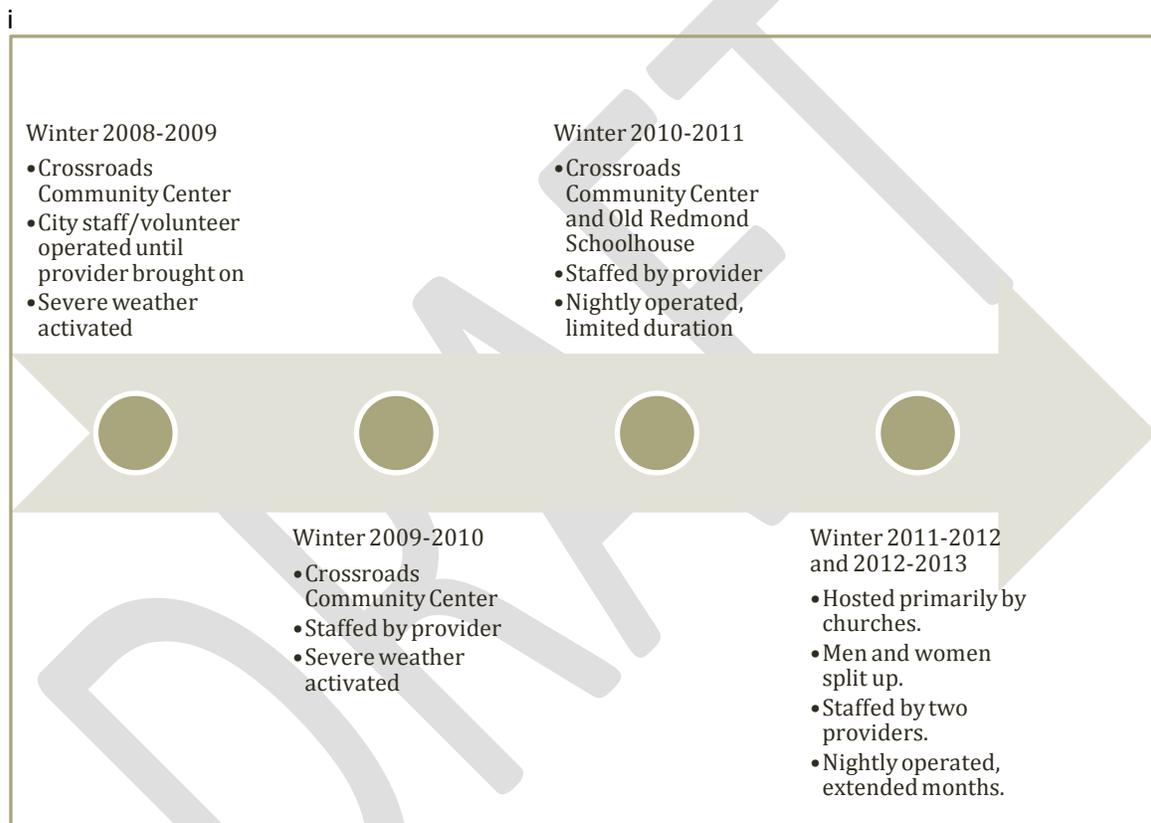
As long as the capacity to shelter/house all who seek it is insufficient, the goal of providing additional shelter beds during the winter months is to ensure the health and safety of those who may otherwise have no option but to sleep outdoors. In addition, emergency shelter has been recognized as one point of entry on the path to housing.

## History of Winter Shelter in East King County

When a homeless man died from exposure on Christmas night, the Bellevue police chief came forward to urge the city to open a place during severe weather, resulting in the opening of the Eastside's first winter shelter in the winter of 2009. Initially this shelter operated as a severe weather model, open only in extreme weather conditions.

*"We have had many police over the years express that they are grateful to have a place to bring the homeless that are wandering the streets while it is so cold and the weather causes significant risk to life safety."*

*David Johns-Bowling, CFH Director of Shelter Services*



## Lessons Learned

The evolution in the shelter model, moving from weather activated to nightly operated, has created many challenges, as well as opportunities.

- **Siting challenges:** Since shifting to the winter model, there have been more challenges than expected with finding siting for these shelters. In order to maintain the lowest barriers to entry, clients are served best in a devoted space. Dual use locations (i.e. community center activities during day, shelter at night) bring additional barriers.
  - Program was successful in dual use space but not ideal for a variety of reasons.
  - Community Centers experienced large loss of revenue due to lack of space rentals.
  - Minimal screening criteria make it hard to find facilities, even churches, willing to host the shelter.

- **Regulatory requirements:** Finding a space that meets various regulatory requirements (fire life and safety code, zoning requirements) has severely limited the number of available options.
- **Neighborhood engagement:** Working with neighborhoods proactively to mitigate concerns is critical, but it does not guarantee that the shelter can stay permanently in that location. More ideal locations would be in a non-residential area.
- **Winter shelter model (open nightly):** Opening on consecutive nights rather than by criteria brought many benefits:
  - In addition to being a life safety shelter when the temperature dropped to freezing levels, participants were spared severe weather conditions that rain and wind bring.
  - Clients were exposed to shelter life and the beginnings of relationship building with shelter staff that were able to share resources and ignite trust building leading some to choose to seek to end their personal cycle of homelessness.
  - Ability for clients to navigate transportation and daytime care, work schedules, etc.
  - Aided local programmatic shelters that lead to independent living by giving the opportunity to offer clients who would have otherwise been turned away to seek refuge within their living proximity allowing for ongoing services and job continuity.
- **Broad community engagement and new partnerships:** Providers were able to effectively engage and partner with neighborhoods, businesses, churches, libraries, police, and other community stakeholders.
- **Outreach:** Having effective outreach services in place helps engage homeless individuals who wouldn't otherwise seek out shelter.

Both winter shelters are used as a point of engagement to help homeless individuals move into year-round shelter programs and as a pathway to permanent supportive housing.

### Data and Capacity

The current capacity of the both Eastside Winter Shelters is 40-50 per night. This compares to year-round shelter of 21 women per night and 30-35 men per night.

| CFH Eastside Winter Shelter for Men                     | Winter 2011-2012 | Winter 2012-2013 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Nightly capacity (available units)                      | 50               | 50               |
| Total unduplicated individuals served in winter shelter | 249              | 210              |
| Total bednights   | 4540             | 4425             |
| Average number served/night                             | 39               | 36               |

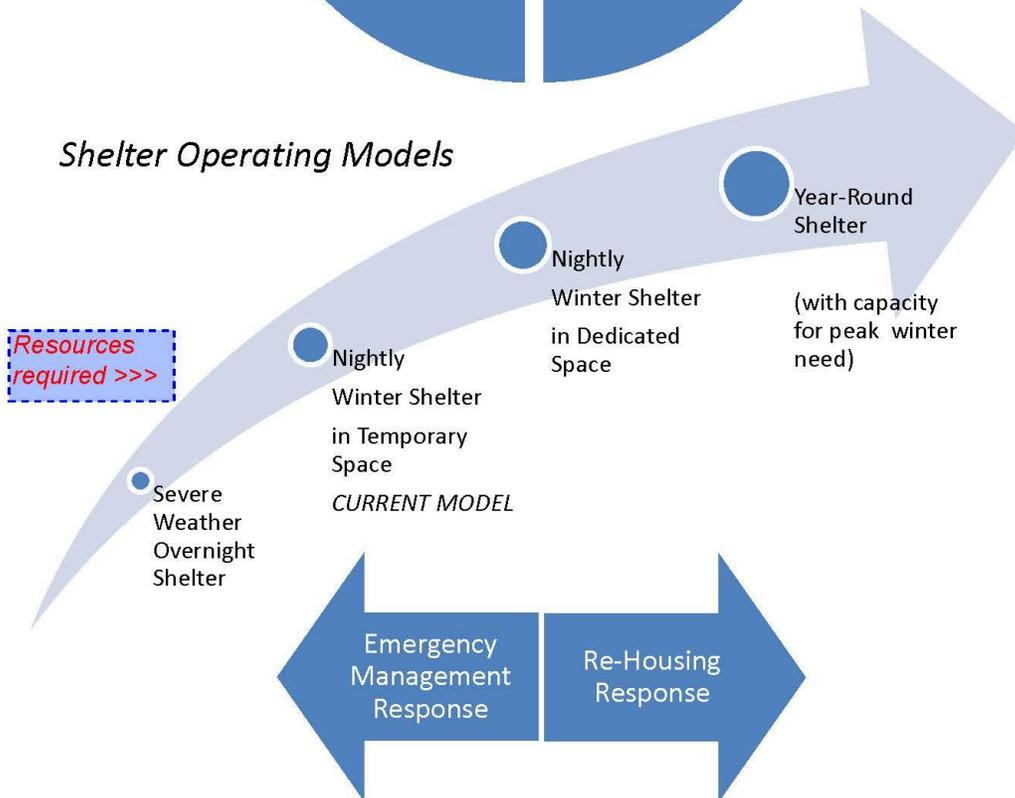
| Sophia Way Eastside Winter Shelter for Women and Children | Winter 2011-2012 | Winter 2012-2013 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Nightly capacity (available units)                        | 15               | 40-50            |
| Total unduplicated individuals served in winter shelter   | 111              | 123              |
|   | 93 adults        | 106 women        |
|   | 18 children      | 17 children      |
| Total bednights   | 1384             | 2207             |
| Average number served/night                               | 12               | 16               |

# Eastside Winter Shelter

*Roles of shelters in effort to end homelessness*



## *Shelter Operating Models*



## Principles

The following principles for a long term shelter strategy in East King County have been developed based on input from various sources including the CEH Single Adult Shelter Task Force Report, experience with operating winter shelter in East King County, and conversations with various stakeholders through the East King County Human Services Forum, Eastside Homeless Advisory Committee and ARCH,

### PRINCIPLES

Shelter is a part of a safe, healthy, and civil community to ensure the health and safety of those who may otherwise have no option but to sleep outdoors.

Shelters are places for engagement and access to services and provide pathways to housing

East King County needs a local shelter system that avoids ongoing siting issues for shelter providers and cities.

Shelters needs to be in central locations with full transit service and access to daytime services.

Providing shelter is a shared responsibility of jurisdictions and community organizations throughout the Eastside.

A complete shelter strategy needs to include some level of outreach and daytime services to assist persons with accessing services and resources.

While shelter needs are more pronounced during winter months, 'low barrier' shelter is needed throughout the year.

### Recommendation

The basic component of a recommendation is that a dedicated location for shelter be secured. From a long term operation perspective, it would be more appropriate to purchase one or two properties rather than lease properties. Though separate sites seem a better overall fit, consideration could be given to doing a single property with a combined shelter. However, further analysis should be done on appropriate design and operational features for a shared shelter and whether a specific location could accommodate those needs.

With a dedicated location, depending on resources available and level of support, there would then be the flexibility regarding months of operation and incorporation of a day center. At a minimum, with similar levels of support currently available, shelter for 4 months and limited year round day center could be accommodated. However, with a dedicated location, it would form the lynchpin for the broader community to support a continuum of homeless services – outreach, day services, case management, and shelter.