

Section E: Community Thoughts on Homelessness- Businesses

What are the community's thoughts and solutions to homelessness?

An initial survey and conversation was done by Mason County Public Health from January 2022 to February 2022 to discuss with the local businesses about their thoughts on homelessness and suggestions for the next steps to address homelessness in Mason County. The survey had a sample size of 15 participants. The survey was conducted to start having discussions before the Point in Time Count about the community and homelessness and identify ways to improve the community as we recover from the pandemic. The survey also opened discussions on what has been done or being done locally and ways to expand on the homeless response system. The survey focused on asking businesses open ended questions about homelessness in the community. After the initial survey, in March 2022, a survey monkey was used to collect more data and to get a larger sample size. 10 additional businesses were surveyed. From the surveys, the following was found:

- 1) How many total unduplicated individual homeless people have you had a negative experience with over a month:
 - a. 2 people (8%) said none
 - b. 13 people (52%) said 1-5 people (approximately 0-1 person a week)
 - c. 1 person (4%) said 6-10 people (approximately 1-2 people a week)
 - d. 1 person (4%) said 11-15 people (approximately 2-3 people a week)
 - e. 6 people (24%) said 16 or more people (approximately 3+ people a week)
 - f. 2 people (8%) did not know
- 2) Main experiences that businesses had:
 - a. Going to the restroom outside (7 people or 31%)
 - b. Trash concerns (7 people or 31%)
 - c. Theft (5 people or 22%)
 - d. Sleeping in front of businesses or parks (5 people or 22%)
 - e. Needles (4 people or 18%)
- 3) Biggest concerns from these experiences:
 - a. Safety (7 people or 32%)
 - b. Trash (5 people or 22%)
 - c. People going to the restroom in public (4 people or 18%)
 - d. Mental health and substance use disorder (4 people or 18%)
- 4) Contributing factors thought to lead to homelessness:
 - a. Mental health and substance use disorder (16 people or 72%)
 - b. Falling on hard times (3 people or 13%)
 - c. Lack of available permanent housing (4 people or 17%)

Mason County has the following available resources for current behavioral health resources available from the Mason County Behavioral Health Resource Guide:

- Navigation and case management
 - Capital Recovery Services
 - Service Opportunity Sponsors
 - Olympic Health and Recovery Services (OHRS)
- Meeting and Support Groups
 - AA at EDI
 - NA at Mt. View Alliance Church, North Mason, and Celebrate Recovery
- Detox
 - The Haven Detox
 - Kitsap Recovery Center
 - American Behavioral Health Systems (ABHS)
- Outpatient
 - Northwest Resources II
 - Skokomish HOPE
 - Social Treatment Opportunity Program (STOP)
 - Squaxin Island Behavioral Health
 - New Direction Counseling
 - Consejo Counseling and Referral Services
- Inpatient
 - Northwest Indian Treatment Center
 - Northwest Resources II
 - Prosperity Wellness Center
 - Gethsemane Ministries
 - BHR, Harvest Home
- Youth Outpatient Services
 - True North ESD
- Medically Assisted Treatment
 - Northwest Resource II
 - Peninsula Community Health Services
 - Medtriq
 - Mental Health Professionals
 - South Sound Clinic
 - Grays Harbor Clinic
 - Olympia Bupe Clinic
 - BAART Programs
- Mobile Assessments
 - Peninsula Community Health Services
- Pregnant and Parenting

- BHR
- Family Education Support Services
- Syringe Exchange
 - Substance Use Mobile Outreach of Mason County
- Crisis Response
 - Olympic Health and Recovery Services
- Mental Health
 - BHR
 - MHP
 - Consejo
 - Peninsula Community Health
 - Telecare
 - Evaluation and Treatment Center
- Naloxone and Narcan
 - Mason County Community Services

Suggestions offered from the businesses:

- Proper care for mental health and substance use disorder
- Permanent supportive housing with mental health and substance uses disorder resources
- Supportive services
- Access to resources and willingness to accept them
- Participating in cleanups
- Teaching life skills
- Homeless being accountable and accepting social norms
- More police presence
- Working for food and shelter
- Tiny homes
- Changing the mindset of the community
- Longer incarnation and bigger jail
- Managed care
- Universal Based Income

From the survey, the largest amount of homeless population seen was around businesses closest to Post Office Park in downtown Shelton and the clocktower. From the survey, the biggest take-aways is that to end homelessness in the community, it will take the community coming together to address the different components to homelessness. This survey found that the negative experiences were with between 1-5 people on average during a month, so it is important to recognize that negative experiences were not with whole homeless population

but just a few people. According to National Alliance to End Homelessness, there are several suggestions for ways to end homelessness. The following are all ways that can help to end homelessness: A community-wide coordinated approach to delivering services, housing and programs needed; housing as the solution by using rapid-rehousing as an intervention to quickly connect people to housing and services; having permanent supportive housing as a solution for the most vulnerable; designing a crisis response system; and increasing employment and income opportunities. From this survey, the hope is to bring together the community to draw awareness and to brainstorm ideas on how to end homelessness in Mason County.

Expansion of Conversions

In April, more surveys were conducted in North Mason with businesses. In North Mason, similar findings were found but new topics were also brought up. The following were found from the North Mason conversions.

- There is estimated to be 6-10 people seen in town and appear to be homeless.
- Over a month, the negative experiences that businesses experienced with the homeless population ranged from 0 to 2 people.
- There is a lot of panhandling, people presenting as being homeless, and crime that is not by the actual homeless population.
- Main concerns and experience with the homeless included: trash, disrespecting property, mental health, and safety.
- Contributing factors thought to lead to homelessness were mental health, poverty, medical bankruptcy, drug use, financial issues, separation, divorce, and wiliness to work or have access to resources.
- Suggestions given to help solve homelessness include homeless complexes where individuals must pay a little bit in rent, stop panhandling and misconception of all panhandlers are literally homeless, mental health and substance use disorder facilities are needed in North Mason, affordable housing, healthcare, and job counseling.