

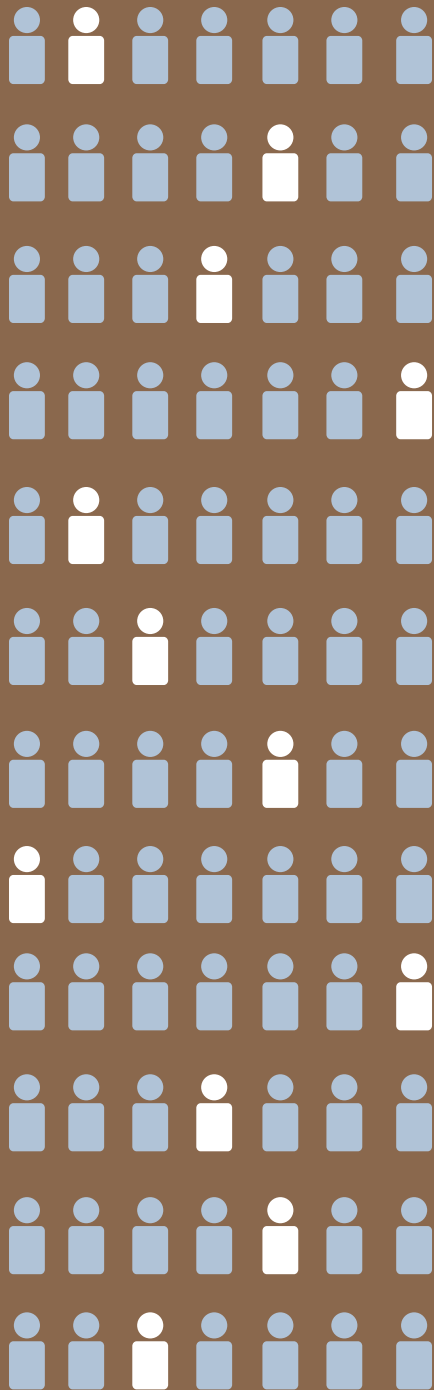


Human Service Needs  
in North King County



A REPORT TO DECISION MAKERS  
2007

## 1 in 7 struggle



## FAMILIES WORKING HARD Falling Short



Life for one out of seven residents of North King County is a struggle. These families and individuals lack enough income to pay for the basic necessities of living: housing, food, clothing, medical and dental care, child care and transportation.

Experts agree that an income below twice the poverty level is not adequate to sustain independent living. For North King County's average family-size of three that's less than \$33,200 per year.

Individuals and families living at or below twice the poverty income level are vulnerable to any change: a work injury, car problem, even a toothache can quickly stress their budget because they have no reserves.

For the more than 1,200 North King County families living at poverty incomes and below, the situation is more dire. These individuals and families must rely on a fragile safety net of emergency services such as food banks and shelters simply to survive. Medical care is sought only in severe illness at high-cost emergency rooms. Currently 4,163 North King County children qualify for free and reduced cost lunches and almost 9,000 people used a food bank in 2005.

Despite the economic boom of the 1990s, the percentage of people living in poverty in North King County in the past decade increased slightly from 4.7% to 5.6%. In 2004 in King County, the poverty rate increased to 10.4%. While no current poverty estimate is available for North King County, the north region is likely trending in the same direction.

Over the past 14 years, median household income in real dollars in King County is up a modest 9%, while the cost of housing, medical care and





child care has skyrocketed. The proportion of families with incomes below 50% of median household income has increased from 21.4% in 1990 to 23.3% in 2004. For a family size of three, in 2004, this was an income under \$35,050, just slightly above twice poverty. A three person family consisting of one adult, one preschooler and one school age child needed an annual income of \$43,728 in 2001 for self sufficiency.

Increases in the number of low-income working families reflect broader changes in the economy including downsizing of companies, outsourcing of higher-skilled jobs and an increase in low-wage service sector jobs.

*(Footnote: source to King County Benchmark's Economics, 2005-6.)*

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## NORTH KING COUNTY A Diverse Community



North King County is becoming a more diverse community with persons of color now comprising 18% of the population. \* One in ten North King County residents is of Asian ethnicity with Chinese, Filipinos and Koreans the largest subgroups, in that order. Hispanics or Latinos, which may be of any race, are the second largest ethnic group in North King County, numbering 5,000, with most living in Bothell and Shoreline.

People of two or more races number almost as many as those of Hispanic origin, reflecting the rapid growth in the numbers of people who designate multiple racial backgrounds and ethnicities.

The people seeking services are more diverse than the overall community because poverty disproportionately affects communities of color. Human service agencies have responded by becoming more culturally competent and accessible.

To provide culturally relevant services, human service providers incur the additional costs of paid interpreters, translation of written materials and recruitment and hiring of staff of color.

About one in six North King County residents speaks a language other than English at home and 14% of residents were foreign born. The Northshore and Shoreline school districts report up to 35 languages spoken by students..

\* For purposes of this report, all of Bothell was included in the denominator of the population statistics, even though almost half the population is in Snohomish county. Several human service agencies serve both North King and South Snohomish County.

## CURRENT ISSUES AND EVERYDAY CHALLENGES

# Priced Out of Housing



The cost of rental housing is a serious problem for working families in North King County. Many low- and moderate-income households are spending more of their incomes on housing than they can afford (rent and utilities should not exceed 30% of income).

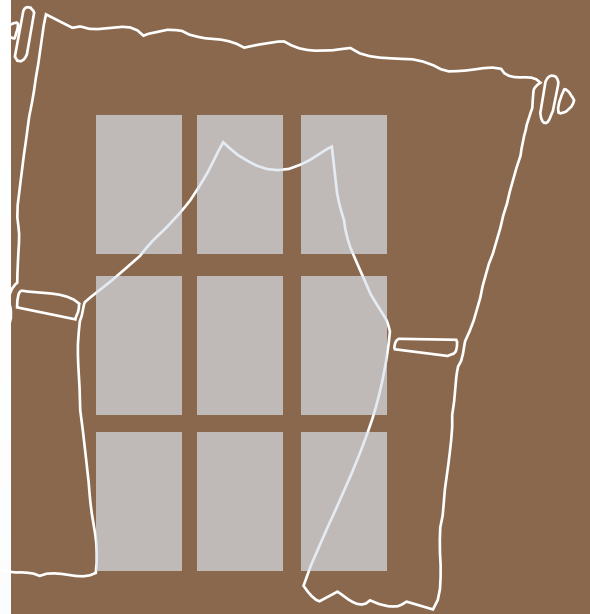
About half of all renter households in King County spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing. As household income declines, increasing numbers of households spend more than 30% of their income on housing. At 60% of median income, four out of five renter households are paying more than 30% of their income on housing.\*

When families are forced to overspend on housing, there isn't enough money left for other essentials such as food, utilities and transportation.

While rents were stable to declining in recent years, prices have increased in response to a tighter housing market. In Shoreline, the largest North King County city, average rent for a two bedroom one bath apartment increased 8% between fall of 2004 and fall of 2006 to an average of \$847 per month.

Loss of rental housing to condominium conversion, closure of mobile home parks and demolition of older, more affordable apartments, all contribute to the scarcity of affordable rental housing. When "market rate" affordable housing is lost, it cannot be replaced without significant public subsidy.

\* 60% of median household income for a three-person household in 2005 was \$39,000.



## Homelessness

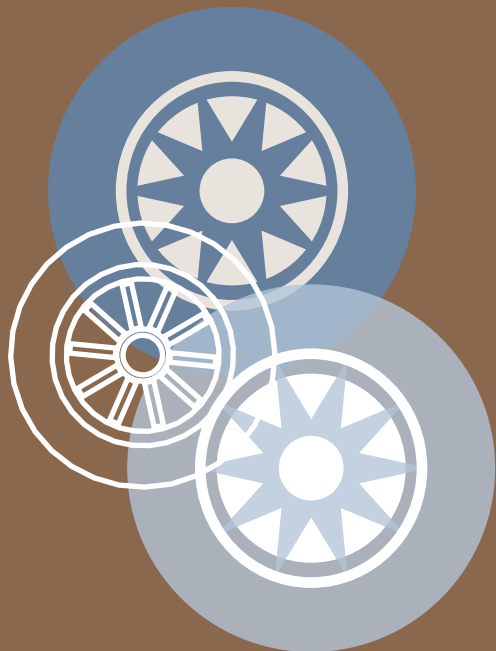
The North Urban Human Services Alliance (NUHSA) is actively involved in solving the homelessness problem in the North End.

NUHSA is one of six founding members of the Committee to End Homelessness, a public-private partnership spearheading a plan to end homelessness in King County within ten years.

The 2006 One Night Count of the homeless counted 39 street homeless and 161 additional people living in shelters and transitional housing whose last permanent address was in North King County. In addition, the Shoreline and Northshore School Districts serve more than 100 children per year from homeless families.

With the momentum to solve this problem, we expect to make major gains in our area with the help of public and private partners.





## Personal Vehicles

Owning a car can create better economic outcomes for low-income families. One agency, which assists low-income King County workers to buy cars, reports that 80% of the participants increased their incomes since obtaining a car.

However, owning a vehicle is costly. A 2001 study estimated the cost of car ownership in East King County for a single-adult household at \$230 per month and \$457 per month for a family of two adults, one preschooler and one school-age child.



## Transportation Is Key



Low-income working families often commute long distances to work. This is because four of the five North King County cities have more people than jobs and residents must go elsewhere to work.

Compounding the problem is the fact that two-thirds of new jobs in King County are located in low-density suburban sites that are difficult to access by transit. As a result ridership is low with an estimated 7% of North King County workers using transit to commute to work. One study found that if about 7% of the total public uses public transportation, that equates to about 30% of the low and moderate-income population.

Without reliable transportation, many low-income workers find it difficult to stay on their present job, look for a better job or take advantage of education and training opportunities. Accessing child care, a critical work support, is difficult using public transit.

The nature of the work makes it hard for lower-wage job holders to use public transit. Many work more than one job, necessitating quick travel between jobs and may work shifts at nights and on weekends, when public transit is less available.

The population 65 and over in King County is projected to almost double between 2000 and 2050. This will increase the need for alternative transportation options as 22% of older adults do not have access to a vehicle and others can't drive because of disability.

King County and the Puget Sound Regional Council are engaged in a planning process to incorporate human service needs into overall public transit transportation plans and NUHSA will continue to monitor and participate in this process.





## Child Care: You Can't Go to Work Without It



Affordable child care is one of the critical supports that enable families to be self-sufficient. The cost of childcare varies by family type, but for families at the median income, the cost is approximately 25-33% of a family's monthly budget.

Half of all children five and under in North King County regularly use scheduled child care services. School-age children are more likely to be in the care of a family member, friend or neighbor.

For low- and moderate-income families, the cost of formal child care is so high that family and friends are often used to provide care. When family and friends are not available, children are home alone after school or caring for younger siblings without adult supervision.

In 2004, the state subsidized approximately one in five children in child care in King County. King County has a higher than average percentage of centers that refuse to accept DSHS subsidized children or limit the enrollment of subsidized children.

Quality child care is a key component to ensuring school readiness and later life success. Every dollar invested in quality preschool saves up to \$7 in later social and rehabilitation costs.

## Health Care

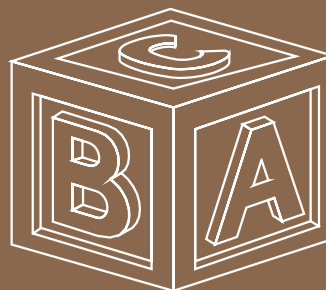
An estimated 12.3 % of North King County adults, age 18-64, are without health insurance coverage. County wide, those that are most likely to lack health insurance are adults who did not finish high school, those who have incomes under \$25,000 per year, are between the ages of 18 and 24 and Hispanic/Latino.

Four of the five North End cities fund Community Health Centers' medical clinic in Kenmore which provides access to affordable medical and dental care.



## Mental Health & Substance Abuse

Mental health and substance abuse treatment services have traditionally been under-funded by the State. The Healthy Families and Communities Task Force, convened by the County Executive, identified a \$26 million gap in funding and recommended a 0.1% sales tax to fund the gap. HUHSA has endorsed this proposal.



## Report Sources

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*Food Life Line*

*Investing in our Families and Communities: Recommendations for Stabilizing the King County Regional Human Services System, Report of the Healthy Families and Communities Task Force, June 2006*

*North Shore School District*

*Port Jobs 2004, Annual Report*

*Puget Sound Regional Council, Puget Sound Trends, No 7, Location of Jobs and People in Central Puget Sound, 1999.*

*Puget Sound Regional Council, King County Special Needs Coordination Transportation Plan, Draft Report, November 2006*

*The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State, Diana Pearce Ph.D., September 2001, Diana Pearce and Wider Opportunities for Women.*

*Shoreline School District*

*The 2006 Annual One Night Count: People Who Are Homeless in King County Washington. Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness-One Night Count Committee and King County Housing and Community Development Homeless Housing Programs.*

*Washington State Office of Public Instruction*

*Photos courtesy of Hopelink*



This report was made possible by a grant from United Way of King County.

# North Urban Human Services Alliance



The Mission of the North Urban Human Services Alliance is to build the community's capacity to respond to human service needs in North King County -- Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, Kenmore, Bothell and Woodinville.

### Our goals:

- Provide a strong voice and leadership role in local and regional human service decisions.
- Identify and communicate emerging community human service needs and issues.
- Support cooperation, coordination and collaboration among providers, funders and the community to enhance resources and the ability to respond to need in the community.
- Advocate for a continuum of care that increases access to services.

NUHSA's membership includes non-profit service providers, the faith community, county and local governments and the United Way.



For more information about NUHSA or to become involved, contact us at [nuhsa@yahoo.com](mailto:nuhsa@yahoo.com).