



WASHINGTON GORGE ACTION PROGRAMS

The Community Action Agency for Skamania and Klickitat Counties

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Annual Report on State of Homelessness in Skamania County

Conditions of homelessness: Skamania County reported 24 homeless persons in the 2022 Point in Time count. This is slightly higher than years prior.

In 2022 the Fair Market Rent (FMR) is \$1,735 for a two bedroom apartment. Skamania County FMRs are the third highest in the state. They are 50.9% higher than the average FMR in Washington (\$1,150). Since the creation of the five year plan in 2019, rents have increased \$294/month. Housing stock is low as is buildable land which makes it difficult to increase available stock.

As of the 2020 census the population in Skamania County has increased with 12,170 persons residing there. 92.1% identify as White and the next highest population is Hispanic coming in at 7.4%. 17.2% of the population is under age the age of 18 and 24.2% are over the age of 65. The median household income is \$69,296 which is lower than the state average and 10.6% of people live in poverty which is a bit higher than the state average. The unemployment rate is currently 6.4% which is a big improvement from the 15.7% peak in April of 2020. It is interesting to note that 47% of employed county residents work outside the county.

The condition of homelessness has not gotten as bad as we expected in the wake of the 2020 shutdown. Anecdotally, there are less homeless persons now due to the influx of emergency rental assistance dollars because of Covid-19. In spite of the difficulties brought on by the pandemic, we know that things did not get as bad as they could have as unemployment rates went up and people began to fall behind on their rent. We attribute this to all of the additional funding that came into our county. Homelessness has been prevented by keeping people in their homes with ERAP and TRAP dollars. Additionally, Mid-Columbia Housing Authority (MCHA) vouchers targeted at homeless households (Mainstream (MSV) & Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV)) also helped keep people housed. Over the past 4 years, MCHA has brought 94 additional permanent MSV & EHV housing vouchers to Skamania/Klickitat counties. CDBG-CV funds also provided eviction/foreclosure prevention for households affected by Covid-19.

Performance in meeting the goals in its local homeless housing plan: The council continues to meet once a month. Community partners share their work and together work to meet the goals of plan. One member has taken on the task of creating a resource pocket guide for homeless persons.

Significant changes made to the plan: There have been no significant changes to the plan. WAGAP, who is the contracted homeless housing organization, keeps the plan updated by noting dates that goals are met. The council discusses the plan on an as needed basis, with partners providing quarterly updates. The council has recently discussed the need to simplify the plan in the next cycle.