

# THE WILLIAM D. RUCKELSHAUS CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## Pathways to Housing Security in Washington State

### FACILITATED DISCUSSIONS TO INFORM A LONG-TERM STRATEGY

Recognizing many challenges related to homelessness and housing instability, the Washington State Legislature tasked the Ruckelshaus Center to facilitate discussions to inform principles, options, and recommendations for a long-term statewide strategy to improve services and outcomes and to create a pathway to housing security. This is part of a project described in full in Section 6 of [House Bill 1277](#) and on the [project page](#).<sup>1</sup>

### INITIAL EMERGING THEMES

In 2021 and 2022 the Center conducted more than 60 interviews, which yielded several key emerging themes.

- **Recognize a holistic and complex understanding of the issues.** Insights from interviewees reflected an increasing understanding that multiple interacting factors contribute to housing challenges, from structural factors related to housing supply and economic conditions to factors related to accessing care and support services to systemic disadvantages that amplify risk for some individuals and families. A comprehensive, long-term strategy for housing security needs to respond within the reality of these multiple and compounding contributing factors.
- **Design for the inherent interdependencies.** Just as there are multiple interacting factors that contribute to housing challenges, participants described the many interdependent needs that, if met, would work together to advance housing security. A strategy should help align the wide range of actors and actions that are relevant and dependent on each other.
- **Balance aspects that seem in contradiction with each other.** Part of the complexity of housing security is that many potentially useful options can sometimes seem to be in conflict, like flexibility and oversight, local control and statewide consistency, or reacting to acute needs and proactively preparing for a long-term response. New opportunities could arise if a strategy shifts from trying to decide between seemingly conflicting choices to discerning how to balance them – which is needed, to what extent, when?

These interviews clarified how we could design further discussions to identify options for how state policies, resources, and other supports can contribute to sustained progress toward housing security in Washington State.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu/projects/current-projects/pathways-to-housing-security/>

## DISCUSSIONS TO IDENTIFY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the first half of 2023, we held focused discussions among small groups with a shared role or perspective. Across these discussions and the preceding interviews, we gathered ideas from varied forms of relevant experience and expertise.

Through online convenings in August 2023, we brought together a broad range of participants in guided discussions to react to and refine the options that have emerged so far and to identify aspirations and concerns for implementation. All convenings included discussions of equity, scale, acute and long-term needs, roles and responsibilities, capacity, and workforce needs. Each convening held the whole picture of housing security in mind while focusing on one of these interrelated themes:

- Meeting needs across the housing continuum
- Responding to holistic needs of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Connecting housing security and economic security
- Navigating flexibility and consistency
- Defining success and managing performance
- Shifting views of homelessness and housing instability

In September we are synthesizing and incorporating the input received in the August workshops. In parallel, we are convening a series of virtual and in-person workshops. All of the workshops in this series will focus on further dialogue about emerging ideas for the strategic framing of the state's long-term response to housing insecurity.

## JOIN THE DISCUSSIONS

These discussions are open to the widest possible range of those affected by and involved in policies and services related to homelessness and housing instability across Washington. For more information on attending, please go to [this link](#).<sup>2</sup>

## REPORTING

Interim reports have been provided in [December 2021](#) and [December 2022](#). A final report is due on December 1, 2023. The final report will include guiding principles; potential components for a long-term strategy; options and recommendations to guide investment decisions and to assess whether those investments are contributing to the desired results; and tangible next steps needed to develop such a strategy. The project team will be available through June 2024 for follow-up engagement.

## ABOUT THE RUCKELSHAUS CENTER

The William D. Ruckelshaus Center is a joint effort of Washington State University and the University of Washington. The Center helps those involved in complex public policy challenges in the State of Washington and the Pacific Northwest develop collaborative, durable, and effective solutions. The Center's areas of work have included land use, agriculture, transportation, natural resources, criminal sentencing, emergency management, healthcare, community and economic development, and governance.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu/projects/current-projects/pathways-to-housing-security/2023-housing-security-workshops/>