

Housing Tonight

I have gone back to reading Ten Year Plans. The reason is simple. I keep having the sense that the current efforts are off-target. Picture a map to San Francisco from Seattle. When the route to choose when driving would be I-5, I keep getting the feeling as we pass Ellensburg that we're on I-90.

There were six original targets in King County's Ten Year Plan. I'll lay them out.

- Preventing Homelessness
- Coordinating Leadership and Initiatives to End Homelessness Countywide
- Building and Sustaining the Political Will to End Homelessness
- Securing 9,500 Units of Housing for Homeless Persons
- Delivering Flexible Services to Support Stability and Independence
- Measuring Success and Reporting Outcomes

Truth be told, none of these are accomplished. Spin masters point to being 40% along on the units goal, but that's through 2011 and that's also not counting the loss of units accumulated since 2005 (which would sadly put us below zero on gains). It's said, "But those lost units weren't 'supportive units.'" Yada yada yada, because no one is counting to see what was and wasn't supportive loss.

No funding has gone to "Building the political will" via the Ten Year Plan process. All the money the Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness has spent since 2001 has gone to that effort. But hey! We will get kudos for that when hell freezes over.

The real tragedy is that the Plan was titled "A Roof Over Every Bed" and it defaulted pretty quickly to meaning "housing first," which is a feel-good effort of taking someone from homelessness and putting him/her/them into a permanent unit. Fatal flaws? Not enough units, not enough supportive services funding, and did I mention it creates waiting lists as its only real outcome every night.

We're pushing HOUSING TONIGHT. If this means creative forms of shelter, more tent cities, safe place to park cars in which people reside, so be it. In Snohomish County's Plan there is a recommendation to use Safe Havens, akin to a drop-in/day center but with single rooms available for overnight. They propose that only for those too hard to serve in any other way. Why limit it that way when in fact neither county is doing any kind of job on HOUSING TONIGHT?

So, we are becoming the moral compass on "Housing First" and any efforts or lack of effort that produce what we have know; that is, too many unsheltered folks every night. We are surrendering dignity and anything else that impedes every unsheltered person finding a safe place to sleep every night.

What good is what we wrote and declared as a goal, the Ten Year plans, when in fact we have made up so many rules to impede the goals that not only are the goals mostly forgotten but the

pretzel-shape into which we have twisted our efforts is every day an insult to those homeless, an assault on those homeless, and the most shameful behavior we could deliver.

HOUSING TONIGHT. Let it roll around your mouth, into your head, and into your lives.

[May 8, 2010](#) - Posted by [kirhac](#) |