Community Assessment
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Executive Summary

The causes and conditions of poverty affect individuals, families and communities in different ways, oftentimes compounding. Thus, the solutions to poverty must be comprehensive, culturally responsive, intergenerational, and long-term.

Purpose and Context

Neighborhood House is a multiservice agency with 114 years of experience fighting poverty in King County, Washington. Assisting over 15,000 people annually, Neighborhood House’s programs and services use best practices to alleviate one or more of the indicators of poverty.

This community assessment includes an overview of Neighborhood House’s services and programs for individuals of all ages, a detailed description of the communities who experience poverty in Neighborhood House’s service area, the structural systems that cause individuals and families to experience poverty, and areas where Neighborhood House can improve and expand to be more effective in combating poverty. The results of this assessment will inform Neighborhood House’s strategic planning, program modifications, and future service expansion.

Summary of Findings

Because of structural racism and gender discrimination, both historic and contemporary, poverty is not experienced equally across King County. Geographically, poverty is concentrated primarily in South King County. While the causes and conditions of poverty are varied, the main issues discussed in this community assessment include a lack of affordable housing and the deep inequities in available services and access to wealth.

Recommendations

As King County grows more diverse, a multiethnic/multilingual agency like Neighborhood House is well positioned to enhance its poverty reduction strategies with the following tactics:

- expand existing services (e.g., early learning, youth, services for elders) to areas with service gaps
- offer new services, such as culturally responsive mental health care
- develop a more robust advocacy strategy, especially around racial equity and inclusion
- develop stronger staff recruitment and retention strategies
- build better systems for service integration and internal referrals
# Table of Contents

- Executive Summary ........................................................................................................ 1
  - Purpose and Context ...................................................................................................... 1
  - Summary of Findings ..................................................................................................... 1
  - Recommendations .......................................................................................................... 1
- Table of Contents ............................................................................................................. 2
- Services and Program Highlights .................................................................................... 5
  - Child Development ......................................................................................................... 5
    - Home Visiting Programs ............................................................................................. 5
    - Preschool Programs .................................................................................................... 5
  - Youth and Family Services ............................................................................................. 6
    - Afterschool Programs .................................................................................................. 6
    - Youth Advocacy Programs ......................................................................................... 6
    - Family Resource Center ............................................................................................. 6
  - Employment and Adult Education ................................................................................ 6
    - Job Readiness Services .............................................................................................. 7
    - Job Placement Services .............................................................................................. 7
    - U.S. Citizenship Services ............................................................................................ 7
  - Housing Stability ........................................................................................................... 7
    - Homelessness Prevention ............................................................................................ 7
    - Rapid Re-Housing ....................................................................................................... 7
    - Student Family Stability Initiative ............................................................................. 8
  - Community Health ......................................................................................................... 8
    - Preventing HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis ......................................................................... 8
    - Reducing Underage Drinking and Drug Use .............................................................. 8
    - Healthcare System Navigation for Immigrant Students ........................................... 8
    - Project Handle@Navos ............................................................................................... 8
  - Aging and Disability Services ....................................................................................... 8
    - Information & Resource Referral ............................................................................... 9
    - Caregiver Supports ..................................................................................................... 9
    - Health Homes .............................................................................................................. 9
Medicaid Case Management

Methods and Data Sources

Primary Data Sources

Client Satisfaction Surveys

Staff Listening Sessions

Interviews with Leaders

Secondary Data Sources

Service Population Overview

King County Poverty Data

General King County Population Trends

Foreign Born Population

Multilingual Population

Elderly Population

Neighborhood House Service Areas

Causes and Conditions of Poverty

Employment

Income

Education

Homeownership

Housing Instability

Cost of Living

Housing Costs

Homelessness

Other Social Determinants of Health

Food Insecurity & Nutrition

Healthcare

Substance Abuse

Substance Abuse in Youth

Community-Identified Needs

Housing

Service Equity Gaps

Staff Recruitment and Retention
Integration of Internal Services ................................................................. 33
The Benefits Cliff .................................................................................. 33
Areas of Opportunity: South King County ............................................. 34
  Affordable Housing ............................................................................. 34
  Early Learning Programs ..................................................................... 34
  Youth Programming ............................................................................ 35
  Services for Elders ............................................................................. 36
  Workforce Development ..................................................................... 36
  Mental Health Care ............................................................................ 36
  Advocacy ............................................................................................. 37
Areas of Growth for Neighborhood House ............................................. 37
  Current Assets ..................................................................................... 37
Areas for Growth .................................................................................... 38
  Racial Equity & Inclusion ................................................................. 38
  Internal Systems ................................................................................ 38
  Staff Recruitment & Retention .......................................................... 39
Services and Program Highlights

Originally founded in 1906 as a settlement house to serve Jewish refugees, Neighborhood House has continually grown and adapted in response to the evolving and dynamic population of King County. All programs, services, and supports are available at no charge to clients. Current Neighborhood House programs and services are summarized blow.

Child Development

Neighborhood House was one of the first Head Start preschool providers in the Pacific Northwest and has maintained its status as a federally-approved provider since 1966. Neighborhood House continues to provide a range of high quality early childhood education programs for low-income families.

Home Visiting Programs

Neighborhood House’s Early Head Start program provides weekly home visits that build on parents’ strengths to promote strong parent-child relationships and deepen understanding of child development. The program serves low-income families with children from birth to age 3 (as well as expectant parents) living in Burien, SeaTac, Skyway, Tukwila, Central Seattle, South Seattle, or West Seattle. Families also receive developmental and health screenings, family support services, and access to group activities.

The ParentChild+ program (formerly Parent Child Home Program) provides weekly home visits in the home language of families to build early literacy and school readiness by focusing on supporting parent-child relationships and learning through play. ParentChild+ serves low-income families with children ages 16-30 months living in SeaTac, Tukwila, White Center, Central Seattle, South Seattle, or West Seattle.

Preschool Programs

Designed for children of all abilities, including those with special needs, Neighborhood House programs combine high quality teaching with cultural sensitivity to foster healthy development and build school readiness. To help students be successful, Neighborhood House provides family support services, meals & snacks, and developmental & health screenings for all students.

As a provider of Head Start and ECEAP, Neighborhood House Preschool offers half day and full day classes for low-income families with children ages 3-5 living in Central Seattle, South Seattle, and West Seattle. Using the Early Head Start combination model, Neighborhood House also has a Toddler Preschool for low-income families with children ages 2-3 living in South Seattle.
**Youth and Family Services**

Neighborhood House provides high quality, culturally relevant programs to low-income youth and families. Programs and services in this division break the cycle of poverty and increase self-sufficiency through a combination of prevention and intervention, including academic and social emotional success programs for youth, systems navigation, and peer-to-peer supports for parents.

**Afterschool Programs**

Neighborhood House runs three tutoring and resource centers in public housing communities in Auburn and White Center. Available to youth ages 6-18, afterschool programming includes academic support and innovative projects that boost social emotional learning and college & career readiness.

Neighborhood House runs an additional afterschool program at High Point in West Seattle that focuses on STEM identity and education through project-based learning.

**Youth Advocacy Programs**

Designed to serve youth who did not have their needs met in traditional classroom settings, Neighborhood House’s youth advocacy programs provide one-on-one case management for opportunity youth\(^1\) to set and achieve educational and career goals. Youth develop plans to address obstacles to success, receive mentoring, and gain job readiness skills often while acquiring alternative credentials for competency (such as a GED).

**Family Resource Center**

Located in High Point, the Neighborhood House Family Resource Center engages traditionally underserved immigrant and refugee families from the surrounding public housing community. The Center hosts events and services that assist families in navigating complex systems and supports parents in becoming advocates for their children.

**Employment and Adult Education**

Neighborhood House offers an array of programs to support low-income adults on the path to self-sufficiency. Services are tailored to different types of job seekers, including Limited-English immigrants and refugees; formerly incarcerated individuals; people experiencing homelessness; Basic Food recipients; and others. This division works closely with the Housing Stability division to support clients in achieving independence.

\(^1\) “Opportunity youth” are defined as young people ages 16-24 who are not engaged in work or school.
Job Readiness Services
Neighborhood House develops comprehensive individualized plans with clients to build on their existing strengths and improve their job readiness skills. Examples of services include ESL classes, computer literacy instruction, enrollment in vocational training, and support with credential attainment. Partnerships with local medical and manufacturing employers provide opportunities for clients who have interests in those particular career pathways.

Job Placement Services
Neighborhood House assists clients in obtaining and retaining jobs. Through ongoing case management, staff ensure clients have support navigating workplace issues that arise and securing opportunities for career advancement. Financial education & coaching is available to ensure clients have tools to manage and balance their finances.

U.S. Citizenship Services
Clients who are seeking to apply for U.S. citizenship can get assistance from Neighborhood House staff with application forms, interview preparation, and general process navigation. Clients may also attend group citizenship classes offered in Kent and White Center.

Housing Stability
Neighborhood House supports individuals and families experiencing housing instability. Working closely with staff in the Employment & Adult Education division, Housing Stability staff help clients navigate complicated housing systems and develop a plan for self-sufficiency.

Homelessness Prevention
Residents of the city of Seattle who are at risk for eviction or losing their utilities can receive emergency rental assistance and case management. Homelessness prevention services are also available to students at the following colleges: Green River, Highline, South Seattle, Seattle Central, UW Bothell/Cascadia, Bellevue Community College, and Shoreline Community College.

Rapid Re-Housing
Families experiencing homelessness can be placed into housing, receive short-term rental & utility assistance, and participate in case management to ensure long-term success.
**Student Family Stability Initiative**

Available to families with students in the Highline and Tukwila school districts, Neighborhood House helps homeless and at-risk families to obtain and/or retain permanent housing. The goal is to keep children enrolled at their same schools, or within the same districts, to reduce disruption of academic progress and social ties.

**Community Health**

Neighborhood House addresses a variety of health issues by bringing resources directly to community members, promoting healthy behaviors in young people, and holistically integrating care.

**Preventing HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis**

Neighborhood House provides free workshops, counseling, testing and referrals to reduce and prevent the transmission of HIV and Hepatitis.

**Reducing Underage Drinking and Drug Use**

Through community coalitions and workshop series for families, Neighborhood House offers services to decrease substance abuse and reduce violence in communities. This also includes a mass media campaign focused on positive peer messaging.

**Healthcare System Navigation for Immigrant Students**

Patient navigators work with recently arrived immigrant youth attending the Seattle World School. Youth and families get access to health services in their preferred languages.

**Project Handle@Navos**

Neighborhood House integrates and co-locates substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, HIV & hepatitis care, homelessness services, and prevention services in partnership with Navos in Burien.

**Aging and Disability Services**

Neighborhood House offers a variety of programs for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and their families to assist in planning for care needs, identifying resources, connecting with services, and navigating long-term care. In addition, Neighborhood House is a designated coordinator for the federally-funded South King County Community Living Connections network of providers to facilitate resource sharing, service referrals, and professional development.
**Information & Resource Referral**

Individuals can contact Neighborhood House for information and resource referrals related to aging and disability services in Seattle and South King County.

**Caregiver Supports**

Neighborhood House staff meet family caregivers one-on-one to connect them to appropriate resources, as well as host caregiver support groups for social connection. There are also some financial services available for non-parental caregivers of children (kinship care).

**Health Homes**

Care coordinators meet with eligible Medicaid recipients in their own homes to develop plans for meeting their health goals and support with managing multiple service providers.

**Medicaid Case Management**

Neighborhood House provides case management services for Medicaid recipients whose preferred languages are Arabic, Farsi, or Ukrainian.
Methods and Data Sources

This assessment took place over the course of September through December 2019.

Primary Data Sources

Client Satisfaction Surveys
Neighborhood House conducts surveys of clients to measure satisfaction and learn about emerging issues. In 2019, Neighborhood House collected data from clients who participated in services provided by three Neighborhood House divisions: Aging & Disability Services, Employment & Adult Education, and Housing Stability. In total, 203 clients provided feedback about their experiences engaging with Neighborhood House programs and services, as well as considerations for improving service delivery methods.

Staff Listening Sessions
Neighborhood House’s executive director completed six listening sessions with groups of staff members from four divisions: Aging & Disability Services, Child Development, Housing Stability, and Youth & Family Services. Over 50 staff members gave input on what they like about working at Neighborhood House, what issues their clients are facing, what Neighborhood House could do to address issues, how Neighborhood House could better support its staff, etc.

- Housing Stability Division (9/25/19)
- Child Development Department (11/1/19)
- Aging & Disability Services (11/4/19, 11/12/19, and 11/20/19)
- Youth & Family Services Division (12/13/19)

Interviews with Leaders
Neighborhood House’s executive director held conversations with local leaders from across various sectors to learn how conditions of poverty are viewed and experienced by others in King County.

- Andrew Lofton, Executive Director of the Seattle Housing Authority (9/6/19)
- Mark Gropper, Executive Director of the Renton Housing Authority (9/10/19)
- Steve Norman, Executive Director of the King County Housing Authority (9/12/19)
- Father John Forman, St. Elizabeth (9/24/19)
- Sara Levin, Vice President of United Way of King County (10/7/19)
- Derek Lum, Equitable Development Policy Analyst of InterIM Community Development Association (10/21/19)
- David Johnson, CEO of Navos (10/22/19)
- Rich Stoltz, Executive Director of OneAmerica (10/31/19)
- Roxana Norouzi, Deputy Director of OneAmerica (10/31/19)
- Cat Martin, Program Officer of Chase Bank (11/4/19)
- Caitlen Daniels, Interim CEO of Solid Ground (11/6/19)
- Julie Peterson, Executive Director of Foundation for Healthy Generations (11/12/19)
- Susan Yang, Executive Director of Denise Louie Education Center (11/12/19)
- Marie Kurose, CEO of the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (11/16/19)
- Mia Tuan, Dean of University of Washington College of Education (11/17/19)
- Dana Arviso, Director of UNIT:ED at University of Washington College of Education (11/17/19)
- Kathy Hare, Associate Chief of Nursing at Harborview Medical Center (11/18/19)
- Mary Jean Ryan, Executive Director of Community Center for Education Results (11/21/19)
- Mahnaz Eshetu, Executive Director of Refugee Women’s Alliance (11/21/19)

**Secondary Data Sources**

Data was pulled from a variety of sources to complete this community assessment. All sources are cited in footnotes. Main sources of data included:

- The US Census Bureau
- Washington State Community Action Program Data Hub
- All Home’s 2019 “Count Us In” report
- King County’s Communities Count data dashboards
- The Road Map Project’s data dashboards
- The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State (Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County)
Service Population Overview

212,509 people, or 10.2% of the population of King County, have lived in poverty during the past 12 months. One in five people (20%) has lived below 200% poverty level. Despite overall increases in median household income and significant investments in poverty reduction strategies, income inequality and deep disparities in poverty continue to persist in King County.

King County Poverty Data

Poverty is not experienced equally throughout King County. The majority of individuals living below the poverty line are concentrated in South King County. This geographic concentration of poverty also correlates strongly with household income. The areas of the county with the lowest average incomes are similarly situated in South King County.

2 ACS 2013-2017 TableID S1701, accessed via https://data.census.gov/cedsci
3 ACS 2013-2017 TableID S1701, accessed via https://data.census.gov/cedsci
Beyond geography, these data obscure how intersections of race, ethnicity, age, gender, and a number of other factors contribute to the overall context of poverty in King County.

- Women and men experience poverty unequally. 9.5% of men and 10.8% of women in King County live below the poverty line. This gender disparity persists whether the individual is employed or unemployed.\(^5\)

![King County Poverty](image)

- Poverty is experienced unequally at different stages of life. Children and younger adults are more likely to be poor than adults over age 35.\(^6\)

![King County Poverty](image)

- People of different races and ethnicities experience poverty unequally. Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latino populations all experience

\(^5\) ACS 2013-2017 TableID S1701, accessed via [https://data.census.gov/cedsci](https://data.census.gov/cedsci)

\(^6\) ACS 2013-2017 TableID S1701, accessed via [https://data.census.gov/cedsci](https://data.census.gov/cedsci)
poverty at higher levels than the county average. Over one in four of all Black/African residents in King County lives in poverty. This statistic stands in stark contrast with the fact that only one in 14 White, not Hispanic/Latino residents lives in poverty.⁷

- Poverty affects people with various educational experiences differently. Higher educational attainment is correlated with lower levels of poverty.⁸

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⁷ ACS 2013-2017 TableID S1701, accessed via [https://data.census.gov/cedsci](https://data.census.gov/cedsci)

⁸ ACS 2013-2017 TableID S1701, accessed via [https://data.census.gov/cedsci](https://data.census.gov/cedsci)
South King County residents tend to have less formal education than residents in other parts of the county. Areas that are home to populations with less overall education correspond closely with areas of poverty in King County (see maps on page 13 for reference).  

Even though individuals are less likely to experience poverty with higher levels of education attainment, gender disparities in income exist at all levels of education. Not only is a woman likely to make less than a man with the same level of education, but she is likely to make less than a man with a lower level of education. For example, the average salary of women with a graduate or professional degree is $60,000 per year, while the average salary for a man with only a bachelor’s degree is $70,000.

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Individuals with a disability are more likely to live in poverty than individuals without a disability. Of the total population of King County over age 16, 9.7% live in poverty. Of the population of individuals over age 16 with a disability, nearly one in five live in poverty.\footnote{ACS 2013-2017 TableID S1811, accessed via \url{https://data.census.gov/cedsci}}

![King County Poverty](chart)

**General King County Population Trends**

**Foreign Born Population**

Overall, 22% of the population of King County was born outside of the United States. Between 2010-2018, the total number of foreign born individuals living in King County increased by 129,815 people (33%).\footnote{ACS 2013-2017 TableID S0501, accessed via \url{https://data.census.gov/cedsci}} This increase outpaced overall population growth, which grew roughly 15% over the same period.

As a fast-growing segment of the population, it is important to note that foreign born individuals in King County are more likely to live in poverty than US born individuals. The total poverty rate for US born families is 4.5%, whereas the poverty rate for foreign born families is more than double that at 11.1%. For single female-headed households, the poverty rate for foreign born families is 30.0%, compared with 17.3% of the US born population of King County.\footnote{Ibid.}
With federal policies threatening low-income immigrant and refugee populations (examples include the threat of a public charge rule and proposed changes to increase naturalization fees to become a US citizen), it is critical that these communities have trusted sources of support they can turn to for guidance.

**Multilingual Population**

As of 2018, 28.1% of the population spoke a language other than English at home. In 2010, when the overall population was smaller, only 25.5% of the population spoke a language other than English. Roughly 51,000 households (5.7%) in King County identify themselves as limited English speaking.¹⁴

Not only is the multilingual population increasing in King County, the languages spoken by foreign born people are shifting in response to national and international issues. An example of this change is the recent increase in enrollment of indigenous students from Central America at the Seattle World School. Over the past few years, Neighborhood House staff have started working with more students who speak Maya K’iche’, Mam, and other languages native to Central America. Many of these students do not speak Spanish, and there are few staff at the school or among partner organizations who speak their languages. With new immigrant populations coming to King County, social service organizations must be flexible and nimble to respond to evolving language needs.

¹⁴ ACS 2013-2017 TableID S1602, accessed via https://data.census.gov/cedsci
**Elderly Population**

The population of adults over age 65 grew 40% from 2010-2018. There are 83,000 more adults over age 65 than there were in 2010, and there are now 16,850 more older adults in King County with a disability. The percentage of adults over 65 living in poverty stayed relatively stable (7.7%), which means the total number of elders living in poverty grew to over 22,000 in 2018.\(^{15}\)

**Neighborhood House Service Areas**

As the cost of living continues to rise in the Seattle urban core, more lower income families are being pushed to relocate to South King County where housing is more affordable.

Given the way poverty is concentrated and experienced in King County, Neighborhood House places particular emphasis on providing services in South Seattle and South King County. Locations where Neighborhood House staff provide services are represented by orange dots on the map below.

\(^{15}\) ACS 2010 and 2018 TableID S1701, accessed via [https://data.census.gov/cedsci](https://data.census.gov/cedsci)
Causes and Conditions of Poverty

Like the rest of the country, residents of Washington and King County experience the effects of historical and present day structural racism. Disparities exist between White people and people of color in the areas of employment, income, educational attainment, and homeownership. All of these factors contribute to whether or not an individual or family experiences poverty. The legacies of European colonization and slavery especially have caused Native American and African American populations to experience poverty disproportionately over time. While legislation and policy changes have attempted to address these historical wrongs, the accumulated benefits of White privilege, compounding intergenerational traumas, and continued practices that uphold structurally racist policies have led to enduring and persistent inequality.

Employment

While the overall unemployment rate for King County is 5%, certain demographics experience unemployment at higher rates than others.16

Income

Median household income has increased across racial groups since 2005, but disparities endure.17 In 2018, median income for White households was $100,000. For Hispanic/Latino households, median income was $67,000. For Black/African American families, median household income was only $55,000, or just over half of what White households earn. When comparing these numbers next to other U.S.

16 ACS 2013-2017 TableID S2301, accessed via https://data.census.gov/cedsci
17 King County Median Household Income Gap by Race, https://www.kingcounty.gov/independent/forecasting/King%20County%20Economic%20Indicators/Household%20Income/KC%20MHI%20Gap%20by%20Race.aspx
counties with urban centers, only two—New York County and Cook County (Chicago)—have wider income gaps than King County.\(^\text{18}\)

Education

Assessments reveal that when children enter kindergarten, they begin school at different levels of readiness. Over half of White children meet all the domains of readiness when they enter kindergarten, compared with less than a third of all Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaskan Native children.

At critical benchmarks (third grade reading and fourth grade math), little progress has been made to address these gaps. Disparities in high school graduation rates are less pronounced, but college completion rates again reveal profound disparities across racial groups and income levels. 58% of all White students who enter high school go on to enroll and persist in postsecondary education; only 46% of Black/African American, 34% of Hispanic/Latino students, 29% of American Indian/Alaskan Native students, and 28% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students persist in higher education. Low-income and limited English students experience lower rates of achievement across nearly all measures.\(^\text{19}\)


\(^{19}\) All statistics in this paragraph and the graphs for educational outcomes on pp. 22-24 came from The Road Map Project’s Data Dashboard: https://roadmapproject.org/data-dashboard/
This graph shows the percentage of children who met all six readiness standards when they entered kindergarten, as measured by the WaKIDS Kindergarten Readiness assessment in the Road Map region\textsuperscript{20} (2018).

This graph shows the percentage of third grade students who met the English Language Arts standard, as measured by the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) in the Road Map Region (2018).

\textsuperscript{20} The “Road Map region” refers to schools in South King County school districts: Auburn School District, Federal Way Public Schools, Kent School District, Highline Public Schools, Renton School District, Seattle Public Schools (south Seattle schools only), and Tukwila School District.
This graph shows the **percentage of fourth grade students who met the Math standard**, as measured by the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) in the Road Map Region (2018).

This graph shows the **on-time high school graduation rates** in the Road Map region (2018). *Note: this graph does not include data for American Indian/Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students.*
Students experience disproportional outcomes at all stages, from pre-K through college. The graph above shows the cumulative effects of these inequitable systems. The numbers reflect the percentage of Road Map region students who entered 9th grade in 2008 and: 1) graduated high school on time in 2012, and 2) persisted\(^{21}\) in a 2-year or 4-year postsecondary institution. Only 40% of low income students who started high school persisted in a postsecondary program, compared with 58% of non-low income students. Additionally, the racial inequities measured in third grade still exist at the college level. After a decade or more of experience participating in formal education institutions, the student population continues to have outcomes that are predicted by race or income level.

The K-12 and postsecondary education systems in King County reinforce disproportionality among communities experiencing poverty, and they do not serve children or young adults from all backgrounds equitably.

\(^{21}\) “Persistence” = enrolling in a postsecondary program for at least two consecutive years
**Homeownership**

Local and federal policies contributed to current racial disparities in homeownership in King County. From the 1910s through the 1960s, hundreds of racial covenants restricted people of color from renting or buying homes in many areas of King County. Discriminatory lending practices (e.g., redlining) made it difficult for people of color to get approved for mortgages. The denial of access to homeownership made it difficult for families of color to accumulate wealth, which has contributed to the disparities seen today.

**King County Homeownership Rate**

Housing instability and homelessness are often intertwined with poverty. Since 2013, homelessness has increased in Washington state. In particular, factors in King County have contributed to a large number of people experiencing housing instability.

**Cost of Living**

The cost of living in King County has risen faster than any other county in the state. According to the Washington State Self-Sufficiency Standard, a King County family with two adults, one preschooler, and one school-aged child needed about $40,000 per year to meet their basic needs in 2001. That same

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22 [https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/segregated.htm](https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/segregated.htm)
23 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBQE5rrWDFa&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBQE5rrWDFa&feature=youtu.be)
24 ACS 2013-2017 TableID S2502, accessed via [https://data.census.gov/cedsci](https://data.census.gov/cedsci)
family needed about $75,000 to meet basic needs in 2017. The main factor contributing to the rapidly increasing cost of living in King County is the soaring cost of housing.25

Housing Costs
While it is normal for rents to increase over time, median rent across the state increased 18% between 2006 and 2015, while median income increased only 3% during that same period. Housing costs are outpacing salary increases for middle and lower income earners, which has exacerbated the number of people who are cost burdened and experiencing homelessness. Not only is it more difficult for individuals and families to stay stably housed on their own, it is more expensive for housing interventions to be effective as well.26

In King County, 35% of the overall population pays more than 30% of their income toward housing. 86% of individuals living below the poverty line are cost burdened; 74% of people below 200% poverty and 50% of people below 400% poverty are also cost burdened. Hispanic (46%) and Black (54%) populations in King County experience higher rates of housing cost burden than other racial/ethnic groups.27

Homelessness
The annual Point-in-Time Count is a snapshot that counts the number of people experiencing homelessness on a single day. The total number of individuals experiencing homelessness on January 25, 2019 in King County was 11,199.28 This is the lowest count from the past three years (2017: 11,643 individuals counted; 2018: 12,112 individuals counted). Over half of the people counted in 2019 were staying in shelters or other transitional housing; 47% were in unsheltered conditions (e.g., on the street, in vehicles, in tents, etc.). The majority of individuals experiencing homelessness were counted in Seattle and Southwest King County (87%).29

Individuals surveyed shared their reasons for not having housing, which included: job loss (24%), drug or alcohol abuse (16%), eviction (16%), rent

http://selfsufficiencystandard.org/sites/default/files/selfsuff/docs/WA2017_SSS.pdf
26 Washington Department of Commerce, “Why is homelessness increasing?”
27 https://www.communitiescount.org/housing-affordability
28 This number does not include individuals who are doubled up (living with friends or extended family), individuals staying in motels, or individuals who are jails, hospitals, etc. It also does not count the unduplicated number of individuals experiencing homelessness over time.
increases (8%), and incarceration (6%). The count also revealed substantial racial and ethnic disparities among people experiencing homelessness:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent of total King County population</th>
<th>Percent of individuals experiencing homelessness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School districts are able to capture a more comprehensive picture of homelessness among the K-12 student population. Homelessness affected 8,938 students, or 3.1% of all students in King County during the 2016-2017 school year. This is a 260% increase in the total number of students experiencing homelessness, compared with the 2007-2008 school year. Hispanic (26%) and Black (33%) students were significantly overrepresented in this population. The majority of homeless students were living doubled up (living with friends or extended family), while the next largest group lived in shelters, and the smallest fraction lived unsheltered. Nearly 100% of homeless students were low-income, and roughly one in five were limited English speakers. The King County school districts with the highest percentage of students experiencing homelessness, aside from Seattle (8%), all were concentrated in South King County: Tukwila (13%), Highline (6%), and Renton (4%).

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31 [https://www.communitiescount.org/student-homelessness](https://www.communitiescount.org/student-homelessness)
Other Social Determinants of Health

Food Insecurity & Nutrition

Food deserts, or neighborhoods that lack access to healthy food sources, often accompany areas of poverty. Out of the entire county, food deserts are only found in South King County, primarily Auburn, Burien, Kent, Renton, SeaTac, and Tukwila. In addition, food insecurity is most prevalent in South King County. Insufficient healthy food is related to other domains connected to poverty; children who grow up without sufficient nutritious food experience increased risk of illness, academic problems, and social-emotional issues.

Healthcare

Uninsured populations are concentrated in South King County. People of color are also less likely to have health insurance than White people. The graph below shows the uninsured percentage of the total population.

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34 https://www.communitiescount.org/food-insecurity
36 2012-2016 percent of population. https://www.communitiescount.org/health-disparities-dashboard
Substance Abuse

As mentioned by many of the individuals surveyed during the Point-in-Time Count, substance abuse is a significant factor contributing to homelessness. Overall, substance-related deaths among adults in King County are on the rise.\(^{37}\) The number of deaths rose over 50% between 2008 and 2018. The number of opioid and stimulant-related deaths has risen more sharply than deaths attributed to other substances.

Some racial/ethnic groups are more likely to suffer from substance-related illnesses and deaths than others. The graph on the next page represents the number of substance-related deaths per 100,000 people, by race. Rates of substance-related deaths experienced by American Indian/Alaskan Native populations in King County are extremely high.\(^{38}\)


\(^{38}\) 2012-2016 rates per 100,000 people. https://www.communitiescount.org/health-disparities-dashboard
Substance Abuse in Youth

Even though substance abuse-related deaths in adults has been on the rise, substance abuse in teens has been declining overall.\(^\text{39}\)

However, Neighborhood House staff have noticed that opioid use has been increasing among youth. A young person in a Neighborhood House program shared recently that their friend overdosed. Fentanyl is of particular concern, so much so that King County is developing a program to give Narcan to students.

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\(^{39}\) Communities Count, [https://www.communitiescount.org/current-substance-use-among-teens](https://www.communitiescount.org/current-substance-use-among-teens)
Community-Identified Needs

Based on the results of this community assessment, there are numerous spaces where more investment and resources could go to address the causes and conditions of poverty. Neighborhood House conducted an internal qualitative review of its services and held conversations with leaders from across sectors to get different perspectives on issues related to poverty. Through one-on-one interviews and group listening sessions, the clients, staff and partners of Neighborhood House shed considerable light on where it makes sense to prioritize anti-poverty efforts.

Housing

Shortage of affordable housing was the most prominent issue that came up in discussions with Neighborhood House staff and community partners. According to Andrew Lofton of Seattle Housing Authority, there are currently 9000 people on the waitlist for public housing in Seattle. Mark Groper of Renton Housing Authority mentioned the issue of discrimination against renters with housing vouchers. One of the reasons why there is not enough affordable housing in King County is the increased development and gentrification of areas that have traditionally housed low-income families and people of color. Derek Lum of InterIm Community Development Association explained that increased development in neighborhoods like the International District of Seattle leads to increased property taxes for nearby homeowners. These financial pressures lead to increased rent and lack of affordability, forcing residents out of their communities. This relocation can cause social isolation, which is related to other detrimental physical and mental health outcomes. Equitable neighborhood development is something that some corporate partners are beginning to prioritize. Cat Martin from Chase Bank reported that Chase is exploring how development can happen without displacing residents, and also while ensuring residents have a voice in the process.

In addition to insufficient affordable housing, there aren’t enough resources to ensure individuals remain stably housed. According to Neighborhood House staff from the Housing Stability division, the strict time limits funders place on programs for serving clients are too short. To help a person or family with multiple barriers (e.g., criminal backgrounds, housing debt, addiction, mental health issues, etc.) succeed in obtaining and retaining housing, staff need to be able to continue working with clients for more than three or six months. Sustained support post-housing placement will reduce the likelihood that the client will cycle back through housing stability programs. Steve Norman of the King County Housing Authority underscored the need for more permanent supportive housing options.

Further, the systems clients must engage with in order to be considered for housing assistance are inequitable, and the process can re-traumatize people who are already experiencing the crisis of homelessness. Neighborhood House staff called
attention to the 2-1-1/Coordinated Entry for All system as an obstacle for people of color and limited English speaking people. Limited interpretation is available, intake assessments disproportionately favor White clients, and the system ignores existing relationships providers have with certain communities.

**Service Equity Gaps**

There are significant geographic disparities in services across King County. South King County has insufficient services to meet the demand, especially given the migration of low-income people to this area of the county. Unincorporated parts of South King County, such as Bryn Mawr-Skyway, are particularly underserved.

Neighborhood House staff from the Youth & Family Services division described a shortage of resources for youth in South King County. There is a lack of housing options for homeless youth and there are few options for afterschool programs or tutoring services. Similarly, there are adult clients in South King County who want low-level ESL classes, but those classes aren’t accessible. Steve Norman of KCHA noted that residents of South King County need more services around Medicaid case management, afterschool programs, family engagement, and early learning.

Even in areas where the volume of services is greater, service equity gaps remain in terms of racial equity and linguistically & culturally responsive programming. Staff from Neighborhood House’s Child Development department shared frustrations with the curriculum that home visitors are required to use. Because the curriculum was not developed with the multicultural and multilingual needs and experiences of Neighborhood House families in mind, staff must spend extra time developing accommodations and reinterpreting material for their families. According to Marie Kurose from the Workforce Development Council, planning for workforce development at the city and county level has not been addressing racial disparities in employment.

In the areas of mental, physical, and dental health care, there is a dearth of services that are culturally appropriate for the population of South King County. As the region continues to become more diverse, the need for culturally responsive providers will grow. Neighborhood House staff from different departments noted the particular need for more mental health services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

**Staff Recruitment and Retention**

There is a lot of public investment in early learning programs, and demand is high for early learning services. However, there is a persistent shortage of qualified staff to fill positions in early learning programs. Requirements for early childhood

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40 “This data tool help homeless people get housing. If you’re white, your chances are even better”, 10/29/2019. [https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/this-data-tool-helps-homeless-people-get-housing-if-youre-white-your-chances-are-even-better/](https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/this-data-tool-helps-homeless-people-get-housing-if-youre-white-your-chances-are-even-better/)
educators have become more stringent; many programs now require staff to have two- or four-year college degrees. While this change was intended to increase program quality, it further constricted the already small pool of staff who are interested to work in early learning centers. Staff working for programs that participate in Early Achievers, like Neighborhood House’s, are eligible for scholarships to cover the cost of earning credits and increasing qualifications. However, this plan can take several years to complete.

One of the primary reasons there is low interest in pursuing careers in early learning is low average salaries across the field. According to a report produced by the Gates Foundation in 2019, childcare center teachers in Washington state have an annual salary of $26,676.\(^\text{41}\) Even though the average salary for a Neighborhood House preschool teacher is well above that average ($39,000/year) and generally higher than salaries for staff of other Head Start programs, Neighborhood House staff from the Child Development department cited low salaries as a big issue. Susan Yang from Denise Louie Education Centers echoed similar concerns about the rate of pay for their early childhood staff; public funding sources, such as Head Start and Seattle Preschool Program, fund minimal rates of pay, so that agency has to raise extra funds to offer salaries that are high enough to recruit and retain staff.

Moreover, building a pipeline of qualified early childhood educators is a challenge when it is significantly more profitable to get credentialed to teach in K-12 school settings. According to Anna Sullivan, Director of Human Resources at Neighborhood House, salaries for teachers working with children ages four and younger pale in comparison to salaries for teachers working with children ages five and up. The average kindergarten teacher in Seattle Public Schools earns a salary over 60% greater than the average Neighborhood House preschool teacher ($63,678 vs. $39,000).

In addition, 43% of childcare teachers turn over every year.\(^\text{42}\) With low pay and high turnover rates, the early learning field struggles to attract and retain staff. Neighborhood House Child Development staff cited concerns about frequent staff transitions and the effect it has on the families and children they work with: “The families that we serve know us, and if one family knows something, they talk to other families and it impacts the community”.\(^\text{43}\)

It is important to note that concerns about turnover were not unique to the Child Development team. Staff in Neighborhood House’s Youth & Family Services division shared this concern. Staff from across all Neighborhood House departments cited low pay as an area for improvement. Neighborhood House staff’s experiences are

\(^{43}\) Listening session with Neighborhood House Child Development staff on 11/1/19.
not unique; nonprofits across the region are struggling with how to pay staff fairly in the face of rapidly rising costs of living. In many cases, nonprofit staff are facing the same issues of poverty as the families they serve.

Integration of Internal Services

Neighborhood House is a large multiservice agency of 300 staff who work from 30+ sites with over 15,000 individuals annually. There are multiple divisions operating with funds from several different sources, each with its own unique eligibility criteria, scope of activities, geographic area, language coverage, and program goals. New programs are developed in response to emerging needs and old programs sunset when funding is no longer available or when needs change.

Because Neighborhood House is a dynamic and complex organization, it can be a challenge to integrate services. While the aim is to provide seamless wrap-around services to meet the individual needs and goals of each client, in practice the work can be inefficient and disjointed. Sometimes staff refer clients to external providers even when the service is available internally. Neighborhood House staff from Child Development shared that they don’t always know who does what outside of their department, and that they don’t know who to refer clients to when they need specific services. Staff from the Aging & Disability Services division said it would be helpful to have access to information about their clients who are co-enrolled in other Neighborhood House departments’ services.

For nonprofit agencies that are underfunded/under-resourced, experience frequent staff turnover, and evolve service offerings to address new community needs that arise, it is a constant challenge to keep all staff informed of updates and changes. Similarly, as the landscape of service providers changes in King County, it can be difficult to know whom to contact for which service.

The Benefits Cliff

As low-income people get jobs or promotions that increase their earnings, it is possible for those raises to impact finances negatively overall. The “benefits cliff” is what people experience when even a slight salary bump makes them ineligible for critical benefits such as food stamps, housing subsidies, Medicaid, etc. It is a significant obstacle to moving up and out of poverty. Because of the issue of low compensation in the nonprofit sector, both Neighborhood House clients and staff experience the plight of the benefits cliff. Members of Neighborhood House’s Policy Council noted that this issue is especially of concern regarding healthcare coverage.
Areas of Opportunity: South King County

Given the steep disparities that exist for people living in South King County, this region should be the focus of anti-poverty efforts. More specifically, South King County program expansion and modifications to service offerings should prioritize and center the people who are affected most disproportionately by poverty: people of color (specifically American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latinx people), people with disabilities, people with less formal education experience, and women.

Neighborhood House has provided services in South King County for over half a century. In response to community-identified needs, Neighborhood House has been intentional about bringing even more services to South King County. Currently, 93% of all program staff are located in South Seattle or South King County offices. Nearly 40% are located south of Seattle, and future planned projects will expand Neighborhood House’s footprint in Burien and Tukwila. Aside from Neighborhood House’s existing and planned future services, there are many areas of opportunity to address the causes and conditions of poverty in the region.

Affordable Housing

Demand for affordable housing in King County is at an all-time high. Every conversation with Neighborhood House staff and partners included access to affordable housing as an issue that is central to reducing poverty. Of the respondents surveyed during the 2019 Point In Time Count, 75% said rental assistance or more affordable housing would help them obtain permanent housing.

Because the people experiencing homelessness and poverty are disproportionately people of color, the process that allows individuals access to affordable housing must be examined and redesigned with a racial equity lens. Further, in order to successfully meet the needs of residents who want to move up and out of poverty, partnerships between affordable housing developers and multi-service organizations who provide wrap-around services will be crucial. 41% of the people surveyed during the Point in Time Count reported that getting a job or increasing their income would help them obtain permanent housing. Other frequently cited solutions included: money for moving costs (36%), case management (26%), help clearing credit (22%), and help clearing rental history (19%).

Early Learning Programs

There are opportunities to grow early learning programs in South King County. Mary Jean Ryan from the Community Center for Education Results shared that

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44 Point in Time Count, p. 35
45 Point in Time Count, p. 35
Skyway is an area that needs more programs for young children. With the recent passing of the federal budget that includes a one billion dollar increase in funding for early learning programs like Head Start, there will be more resources available to grow programs. All program expansion should have culturally responsive curricula and teaching built in to the program design.

**Youth Programming**

South King County needs more options for out-of-school-time programs for low-income youth. As of January 2020, programs for youth in King County were concentrated in the Seattle Public School district. Areas of poverty in South King County, especially in Kent and Auburn, lack critical out-of-school-time services. Some high poverty census tracts in South King County have zero out-of-school-time opportunities available for youth.46

Due to the lack of public transportation options, programs that are neighborhood-based would be more accessible and allow for more family engagement and interaction. Neighborhood House currently runs two neighborhood-based programs in Auburn, but there is opportunity for program growth in the South King County region.

**Services for Elders**

As the population of foreign-born people and people over age 65 in South King County grows, there is more demand for culturally and linguistically appropriate services for elders, such as Health Homes and Medicaid Case Management. Organizations that hold community trust will be the most successful in providing these services.

**Workforce Development**

An interview with Kathy Hare of Harborview Medical Center revealed that there are staffing shortages in the medical field. The staffing gaps for positions like hospital assistants are only getting worse. Employment training and placement programs have an opportunity to partner with employers, like Harborview, to upskill staff for high needs jobs. Similarly, there is opportunity to develop partnerships with higher education institutions to upskill early learning professionals to meet the demand for childcare and preschool services.

**Mental Health Care**

There is demand for culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate mental health care services. Presently, there are few multilingual/multicultural mental health care providers who are appropriate for serving the diverse population of South King County.

According to David Johnson from Navos, the largest mental healthcare organization in Washington, the shift toward integrated health care has prioritized addressing social determinants of health. In addition to providing accessible, appropriate mental health care to folks, supportive housing and jobs must be available so clients can work toward becoming self-sufficient.

Neighborhood House is considering partnering with Navos to become a behavioral health primary care provider. With its existing portfolio of services that address social determinants of health in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways, Neighborhood House could have the capacity to expand services that support holistic mental health care. At the time of writing, the agency is exploring this opportunity.
Advocacy

As a non-profit working with disenfranchised communities, it is Neighborhood House’s responsibility to uplift the voices of its clients authentically to advocate for issues related to poverty. However, as a 501(c)3 with primarily restricted grant funding, advocacy work must be focused and deliberate.

There are a range of issues at the local, state, and federal level that are relevant to South King County residents living in poverty. Organizations such as OneAmerica already do powerful advocacy work around several issues of concern to Neighborhood House constituents. Partnering together around collective advocacy issues could be an effective approach for changing policies on housing, wages, early learning, etc.

Areas of Growth for Neighborhood House

As Neighborhood House considers its roles and responsibilities in the South King County context, there are steps the agency can take to deepen its commitment to impoverished communities while centering the needs of people most impacted by disparities.

Current Assets

With 114 years of experience working with diverse communities across King County, Neighborhood House has cultivated a strong reputation as a partner to individuals and families from all backgrounds. To maintain this high level of service quality, Neighborhood House recruits staff from diverse backgrounds who reflect the community served. Hiring staff who share the languages, cultures, and experiences of clients creates a welcoming environment for communities who have historically been treated poorly by systems and institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Neighborhood House clients 2018</th>
<th>Neighborhood House staff August 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
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<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Client satisfaction surveys reveal that most are pleased with their experiences engaging with Neighborhood House staff and programs. In 2019, 92% of clients surveyed were very satisfied or extremely satisfied with the Neighborhood House services they received, and 97% reported they would refer their family or friends to Neighborhood House. These high levels of client satisfaction speak to Neighborhood House’s strong sense of trust and integrity that has built up over many years of service in South King County communities.

**Areas for Growth**

As a social services agency, there is much Neighborhood House can do internally to deepen commitments to racial equity & inclusion, improve its internal systems & structures, and attract & retain top talent.

**Racial Equity & Inclusion**

It is clear that there are profound racial disparities among the population of people in King County who experience poverty. These disparities are reflected in the demographics of clients served through Neighborhood House programs. Because the majority of Neighborhood House clients are people of color and over half of clients are Black or African American, it is critical that all services and internal systems are developed and implemented through the lenses of racial equity, anti-racism, and inclusion. Neighborhood House has sent staff to trainings and staffed committees to surface and confront these issues, but there is more to do to deepen Neighborhood House’s commitment to its staff and the community.

During listening sessions, Neighborhood House staff expressed concerns over low salaries, high staff turnover rates, and recruitment struggles as equity issues. These topics were of particular concern for staff in the Child Development and Youth & Family Services divisions. Some suggested subsidizing tuition costs to upskill and promote lower-level staff, many of whom are people of color, from within.

Neighborhood House does not collect information on clients’ immigration statuses, but some staff expressed concerns about the lack of services for undocumented or mixed status families. Relatedly, with the Census coming up, there are fears about participation among both documented and undocumented immigrant families. These fears could lead to undercounted populations, which would result in an inequitable distribution of future resources.

**Internal Systems**

Given the challenges staff shared around the integration of services across Neighborhood House’s comprehensive array of programming, there is room to
improve processes for making internal client referrals. With more collaboration across departments and divisions, clients will have a more holistic and streamlined experience engaging with Neighborhood House services.

Input from staff and clients could help shape what a more robust internal referral system could look like.

**Staff Recruitment & Retention**

With ongoing challenges around staff recruitment and retention, there are questions about what the agency can do to create an environment that motivates people to want to work at Neighborhood House and stay with Neighborhood House. Many staff commented on staff diversity, the welcoming organizational culture, and the organization’s mission as reasons why they enjoy working at Neighborhood House. In addition to low salaries, staff shared concerns about jobs being stressful, benefits being inadequate, and opportunities for professional development being insufficient.

Staff believe in the importance of their work, but there are factors that prevent talented and valuable staff from being able to stay in their roles at Neighborhood House. There is appetite to explore new ideas about how to cultivate qualified staff and encourage them to remain in their roles. To address staff shortages, Neighborhood House has already implemented new recruitment strategies in the Child Development department that have seen strong success, including: developing relationships with colleges who have Early Childhood Educator programs, creating a recruitment video, and hosting hiring events where prospective candidates could be interviewed on the spot. As a result, Neighborhood House saw its vacancy rate for Child Development staff go from 18% in October to 5% at the end of December.

To address the issue of low salaries, there are several policy efforts going on, including the Unified Vision for Early Learning, as well as a push to increase the reimbursement rate for community based organizations from the State of Washington. Legislators at the state level are looking for sustainable sources of funding to ensure social service workers can earn a living wage.

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47 Some programs, like many in the Housing Stability division, cannot take internal referrals because of external processes beyond the scope of Neighborhood House’s control.