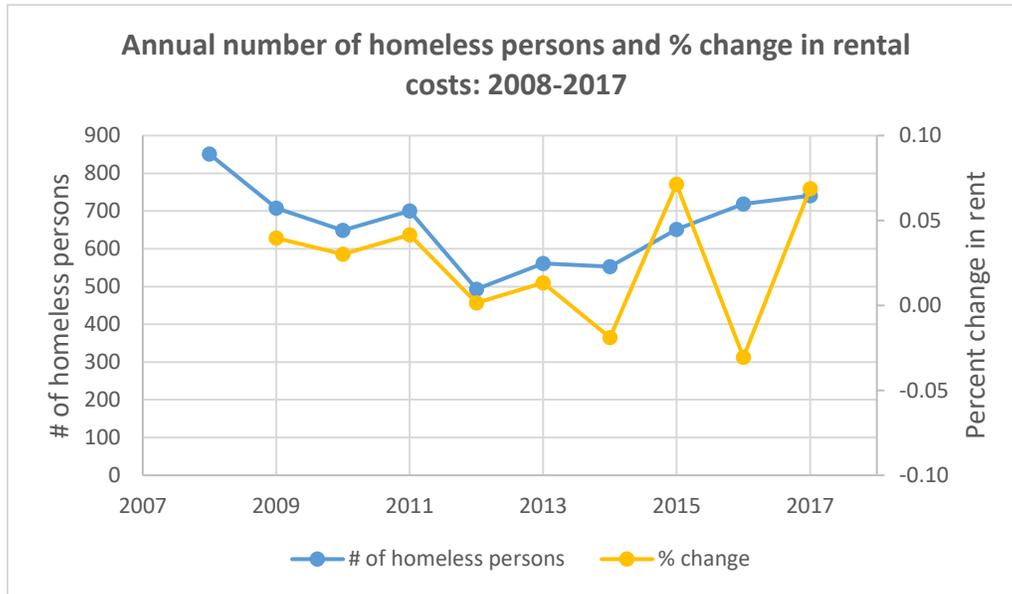


Homelessness

Homelessness and housing trends

In the last decade, homelessness in Whatcom County has declined overall, from a high of 851 in 2008 to a low of 493 in 2012, and back up to 742 in 2017. The total number of people experiencing homelessness began to increase beginning in 2013 – and has continued to climb since. In the five-year period from 2012 to 2017 (since the last Consolidated Plan), there has been a 50% increase in the number of persons experiencing homelessness.¹ The graph below shows the percent change in HUD’s Fair Market Rent and the number of people experiencing homelessness in Whatcom County.



Homeless populations and need

HUD requests data on people and families who are experiencing homelessness in several categories. **Since 2012, there has been an increase in all types of populations experiencing homelessness in Whatcom County.** The largest percentage point increases are among the number of chronically homeless families, both those experiencing homelessness in a given year and becoming homeless in a year. The largest group of individuals by far are individuals in families with only adults.

Population	# becoming homeless/yr			# exiting homelessness to stable housing/yr			Avg # of days experiencing homelessness		
	2012	2017	% chg.	2012	2017	% chg.	2012	2017	% chg.
Persons in families with adults & children	364	834	129%	268	669	150%	189	99	-48%
Persons in families with adults only	365	910	149%	151	375	148%	235	259	10%
Chronically homeless individuals	130	226	74%	47	113	140%	273	338	24%
Chronically homeless families	21	58	176%	2	44	2100%	193	117	-39%
Veterans	51	100	96%	50	31	-38%	146	153	5%

¹ Whatcom Homeless Service Center: 2017 Point-In-Time Count.

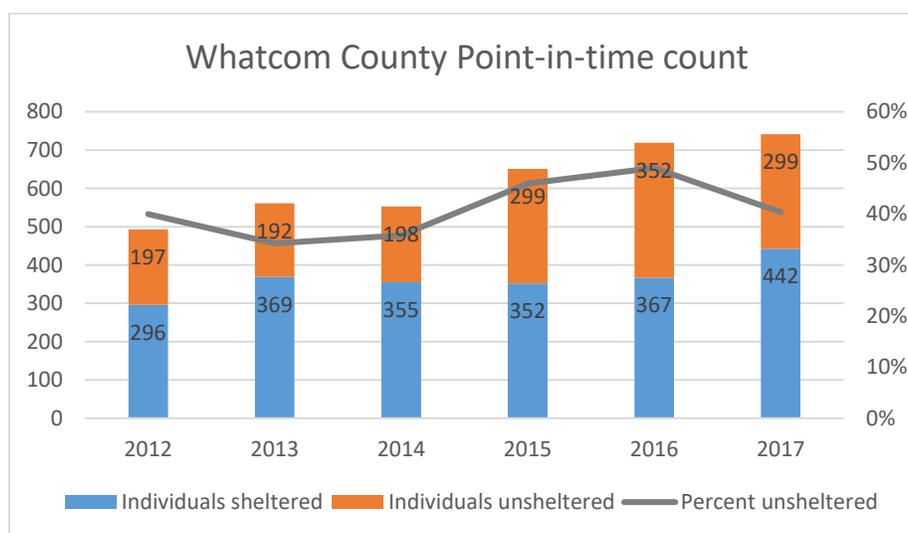
Homelessness (*continued*)

Despite the increased need, there have also been some positive changes. **We see that the number of days that families with children and chronically homeless families experience homelessness has decreased by 48% and 39%, respectively.** However, the results for individuals and families without children have not been as significant. We also see a substantial increase in the numbers of all populations who are exiting homelessness into stable housing among all groups except Veterans. This speaks to the significant effort given to rehousing individuals and families, but which is still not adequate to address all needs, especially of adults and individuals.

Unsheltered population

The Whatcom County Point-in-Time count shows that the total number of homeless individuals has grown since 2012. Over the same period, the percentage of homeless individuals who are unsheltered increased, but then fell back to the 2012 level after Lighthouse Mission's interim low-barrier shelter opened its doors in Fall 2016, providing 80 additional beds. The table below shows that unsheltered individuals grew in absolute number and as a percentage of the total homeless population each year from 2012 to 2016. In 2017, the percent unsheltered dropped back down to 40%, even as the homeless population continued to grow. ²

Whatcom County Point-in-Time count						
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Individuals sheltered	296	369	355	352	367	443
Individuals unsheltered	197	192	198	299	352	299
Percent unsheltered	40%	34%	36%	46%	49%	40%
Total	493	561	553	651	719	742



There is often concern that people experiencing homelessness will come to Bellingham seeking services if more services are made available. As the graph illustrates, the number of homeless individuals climbed even before shelter space did. The Whatcom County Point-in-Time count consistently finds about 70% of the homeless population had their last residential address here (i.e., became homeless in Whatcom County) over the past decade.

² City of Bellingham 2017 Estimate Review worksheet (06/09/2017). Internal.