

Words and Phrases to Know

In an effort to make our strategic plan as accessible as possible to all audiences, Mid-Columbia Houseless Collaborative planning participants requested the inclusion of the following definitions:

Affordable and Accessible Housing

Affordable and accessible housing includes features that make it usable for people with disabilities or limited mobility and allows residents to spend no more than 30% of their income to live there. In this strategic plan, we also define “affordable” housing to mean housing that is reserved for households making 80% or less of the Area Median Income.

Area Median Income (AMI)

The household income for the “middle” household in a geographic region. Half of the families in a region earn more than the AMI, and half earn less. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development calculates and defines the AMI for specific geographic areas across the country every year. Housing providers then use this number as a reference point when setting local income and affordability requirements for available housing units.

Acquisition and Rehabilitation/Rehab

The process of gaining ownership and management rights over a real estate property and renovating existing units rather than developing new units. Acquisition and rehab are valuable tools used by proponents of affordable housing and preservation.

BIPOC

An acronym that stands for “Black, Indigenous, and people of color.” This is a term used to describe communities of color, while centering the experience of Black and Indigenous people, who experience disproportionately high institutional barriers.

Chronically Houseless

Experiencing houselessness for at least a year, or repeatedly over time, while struggling with a disabling condition like a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability.

Construction Excise Taxes

A charge placed on new construction (except for affordable and accessible housing projects) or additions to existing structures, the revenue from which can be used to fund incentives for building affordable housing and other housing-related programs.

Coordinated Entry

A process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access to resources and are quickly assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and other assistance based on their vulnerabilities and strengths.

Culturally Responsive/Culturally Specific Services

Being able to understand and consider the different cultural backgrounds of clients, and respecting clients' customs, experiences, perspectives, and language when assisting them to access resources.

Equity/Equitable

While an equal approach means giving everyone the same resources, an equitable approach acknowledges that each person has different circumstances, needs, and institutional barriers they have faced. Equity means allocating resources and opportunities in a way that creates equal outcomes.

General Obligation Bonds

Municipal bonds (debt obligations issued by government entities) that provide a way for state and local governments to raise money for public projects that may not yield revenue. General obligation bonds are backed by the state or local government's ability to use taxes to pay bondholders.

Houseless/Houselessness

Lacking a place to live. Many housing and social service providers have begun using this term instead of "homeless," because many people who are or have been unhoused prefer it. This is because "home" is more than a building where a person lives; it represents community, social connections, memories, friends, family, or more. People who lack a physical house often still identify strongly with a place they call home.

Housing Stabilization

The process of connecting to a wide range of individualized services—not just those that are directly related to housing—that help facilitate a person's ability to find and/or stay in housing.

Impact Fees

Fees charged to property developers by local governments for the new infrastructure that must be built to accommodate new development.

Jail Diversion

Community-based services that are designed to keep individuals, especially those with behavioral health issues, from becoming incarcerated by connecting them to other community-based resources like mental health support, substance abuse services,

employment services, and housing. Jail diversion aims to minimize the contact individuals have with law enforcement and help them avoid or reduce jail time.

LGBTQ+

An abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and more. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Lived Experience (With Houselessness)

Personal knowledge about houselessness that has been gained because of going through houselessness first-hand rather than through representations constructed by others.

Medical Respite

Medical respite care is short-term residential care for people experiencing houselessness who are too ill or frail to recover from an illness or injury on the streets, but not ill enough to be in a hospital. Medical respite care helps people rest and recover in a safe environment while accessing medical care and other supportive services.

Point in Time Count

Also known as the PIT Count, this is the annual count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing houselessness across the U.S. during the last ten days of January.

Preservation

The process of retaining existing affordable housing, whether at subsidized or fair market costs, and protecting its affordability for current and future tenants.

Rapid Re-Housing

A type of housing assistance that quickly helps people experiencing houselessness to get into housing with the help of application fees, security deposit funding, time-limited rent assistance, incentives to encourage landlords to place clients in their units, and case management services.

Reintegration After Incarceration

The process a person goes through to re-enter society and become a productive member of the community after serving time in jail or prison.

Services/Supportive Services

Aid that makes it easier for someone to get into and stay in housing long-term by enhancing their overall way of living. Examples include help directly related to housing—such as rent assistance—or other resources, such as reliable transportation, affordable childcare, food assistance, training in budgeting and money management, health care, job training, mental health services, or substance abuse treatment.

Supportive Housing

The combination of ongoing affordable housing assistance, such as rent subsidies, with flexible and supportive services for people experiencing homelessness. The goal of supportive housing is to help people stay housed and live a more productive life in the community. There are multiple models of supportive housing: it could include the construction or renovation of new housing, setting aside units in privately-owned buildings, or leasing individual apartments throughout a specific geographic area where clients can receive services from supportive case managers.

System Development Charges

Fees charged on new development, and in some cases on redevelopment. Revenue raised by these fees can help fund new infrastructure or upgrades to existing infrastructure.

Traditional Health Workers

Frontline public health workers who work in health care clinic or community to assist individuals to achieve positive, health-related outcomes. Examples of traditional health workers include community health workers, personal health navigators, peer support specialists, and peer wellness specialists. Traditional health workers may have a particular specialty area or background, such as being a peer support specialist who uses their personal experience recovering from addiction to help a client struggling with a substance use disorder. Or they may promote health on a more holistic level by helping clients navigate multiple supportive services, including those that are not related to health care but contribute to overall well-being and stability.

Urban Renewal

A set of plans and activities, often attached to public financing mechanisms, to upgrade neighborhoods that are in a state of disrepair or decay.