- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe: 253-939-3311
* Ukrainian Community Center: 425-430-8229
- United Indians of All Tribes Foundation: 206-285-4425

- HopeLink | Multi-Service Center: 800-348-7144
- Salvation Army: 253-852-4983
* St. Vincent de Paul: 253-833-2546
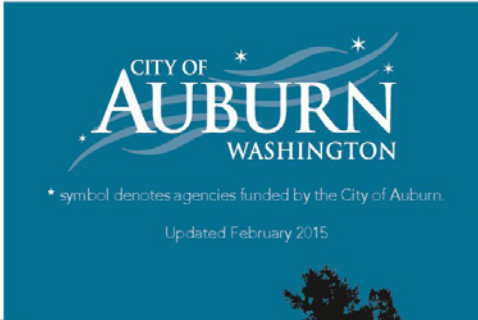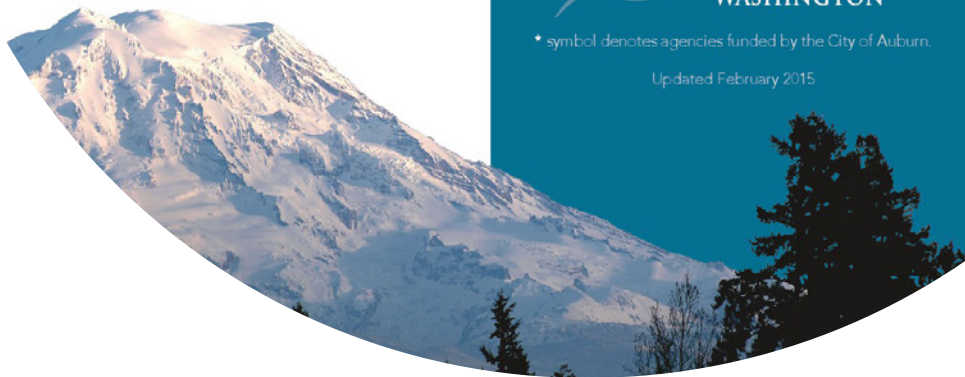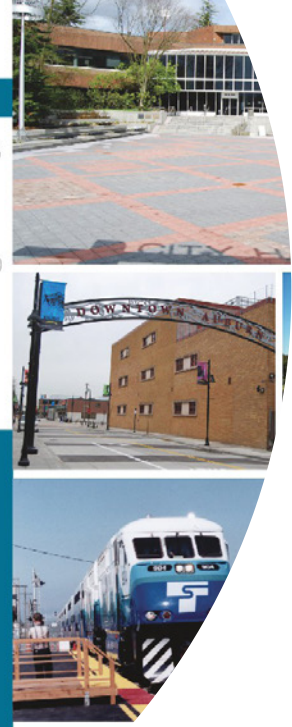
SENIOR SERVICES

* Auburn Senior Activity Center: 253-931-3016
* Catholic Community Services: 253-854-0077
* City of Auburn Senior Utilities Rebate: 253-931-3038
* Comcast Senior Cable Discount Program
  (residents within Auburn city limits): 253-804-5078
- HOPELINK Energy Assistance Program: 800-348-7144
- Hyde Shuttle: 877-415-3632
25-5000
304-8752
- Salvation Army:
  253-946-1346 (Federal Way)
  253-852-4983 (Kent)
- Senior Housing Assistance Group (SHAG):
  253-735-6662
* Senior Services: 206-448-3110
* Senior Services Volunteer Transportation:
  206-448-5740

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VETERAN SERVICES

- American Legion: 253-939-5789
- City of Auburn Veterans & Human Services: 253-876-1965
- Department of Veterans Affairs: 800-827-1000
- King County Veterans Info & Assistance: 877-904-8387
- VA Puget Sound Health Care System: 800-329-8387
- Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-8255
- Veterans Housing Options Group (VHOG): 425-203-7200
- Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW): 253-293-5839

CITY OF
AUBURN
WASHINGTON

* symbol denotes agencies funded by the City of Auburn.

Updated February 2015

CITY OF AUBURN
Methods for Counting Auburn's Homeless Population

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University of Washington ○ Department of Sociology
Sociology 415-04: The City and Neighborhood Dynamics

Instructor: Dr. Kyle Crowder

Report Author: Paris S. Bonacum

Fall 2016

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

ABOUT LIVABLE CITY YEAR

The UW Livable City Year program (LCY) is an initiative that enables local governments to tap into the talents and energy of the University of Washington to address local sustainability and livability goals. LCY links UW courses and students with a Washington city or regional government for an entire academic year, partnering to work on projects identified by the community. LCY helps cities reach their goals for livability in an affordable way while providing opportunities for students to learn through real-life problem solving. LCY has partnered with the City of Auburn for the 2017-2018 academic year, the inaugural year of the program.

The UW's Livable City Year program is led by faculty directors Branden Born with the Department of Urban Design and Planning, and Jennifer Otten with the School of Public Health, in collaboration with UW Sustainability, Urban@UW and the Association of Washington Cities, and with foundational support from the College of Built Environments and Undergraduate Academic Affairs. For more information contact the program at uwlcy@uw.edu.

LIVABLE CITY YEAR: ONE YEAR. ONE CITY. DOZENS OF UW FACULTY AND HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS, WORKING TOGETHER TO CATALYZE LIVABILITY.

LCY.UW.EDU

ABOUT THE CITY OF AUBURN

The City of Auburn is well-positioned to take advantage of many of the opportunities in the Puget Sound region. Centrally located between Seattle and Tacoma, Auburn is home to more than 77,000 residents. It is the land of two rivers (White & Green), home to two nations (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe & City of Auburn) and spread across two counties (King & Pierce).

Auburn was founded in 1891 and has retained an historic downtown while also welcoming new, modern development. Known for its family-friendly, small-town feel, Auburn was initially an agricultural community, the city saw growth due to its location on railroad lines and, more recently, became a manufacturing and distribution center. Auburn is situated near the major north-south and east-west regional transportation routes, with two railroads and close proximity to the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma.

Auburn has more than two dozen elementary, middle and high schools, and is also home to Green River College, which is known for its strong international education programs. The city is one hour away from Mt. Rainier, and has many outdoor recreational opportunities.

The mission of the City of Auburn is to preserve and enhance the quality of life for all citizens of Auburn, providing public safety, human services, infrastructure, recreation and cultural services, public information services, planning, and economic development.
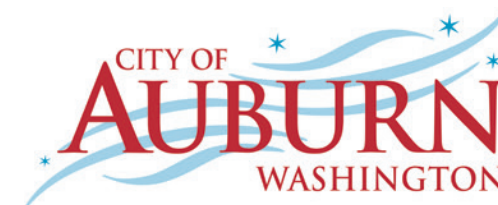
WWW.AUBURNWA.GOV

introduce a free mobile app specific to Auburn. We believe that these changes stand to benefit Auburn in its efforts to accurately count and map the distribution of the unsheltered, as well as provide more comprehensive information about the demographics of unhoused individuals and causes of unstable housing.

01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Homelessness is an issue of concern for the City of Auburn, Washington. Like many American cities, Auburn's homeless population assessment is likely lower than actual population numbers, as current counting systems are typically unable to account for the total number of those without permanent shelter. This paper outlines aspects of Auburn's counting methods that can be improved, describes practices utilized by other cities, and includes a number of suggestions that the city can adopt in order to maximize efficacy in counting and better understanding its homeless population.

Auburn partakes in an annual one-night count, in which volunteers sweep areas of known homelessness throughout the city and count visible unsheltered people. Volunteers tally numbers of unsheltered homeless people and collect any demographic details. Our research found that by only counting once a year and not gathering more detailed information, gaps in data are almost surely present. Most other American cities use the same point-in-time method as Auburn, and while a few are more in-depth, the specific methods are largely similar.

In this report we recommend a series of changes to Auburn's current counting methods. We suggest the city implement quarterly counts instead of an annual count, recruit homeless volunteers to assist with the counts, distribute both abbreviated and comprehensive surveys to unsheltered individuals, take into consideration the number of families accessing free and reduced lunch in the public school system, gather specific information about unsheltered youth, monitor the homeless populations' usage of public transportation and service access, and

02 INTRODUCTION

As one of several projects associated with homelessness, this project aims to assess a variety of the city's concerns and devise a series of potential solutions. The goal of this project was to develop improved methods to count the number of unsheltered homeless in Auburn. Consequently, it was also important to include ideas to facilitate mapping the distribution of unsheltered people and enable the development of more accurate demographic information. Unsheltered refers to the lack of general lawful access to a building to sleep in, and due to incomplete counting methods the exact numbers are unknown. The solution to this nationwide issue is still difficult to find. Throughout this project, we examine Auburn's counting practices to find weaknesses in the current research, compare and contrast the counting methods used by other U.S. cities, and suggest new methods that will enable Auburn to develop a more accurate understanding of the scope of homelessness. Ultimately, we hope that our work will help to reduce the prevalence of homelessness in Auburn.

03 AUBURN'S CURRENT METHODS FOR COUNTING HOMELESS

Our first step in this project was to assess the current tools Auburn uses to keep track of the size of the homeless population, analyze its demographics, and also look to find potential issues in accuracy. This is a critical problem because inaccurate counting practices can render information concerning the size of the homeless population inaccurate. This element of the project is key to understanding how to address our overall goal of accurately counting the homeless population, mapping distribution, and identifying characteristics in order to discover how best to administer services.

In 1984, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducted and published the first point-in-time study of homelessness. Since then, this point-in-time study has occurred every year in cities all across the country during the last two weeks of January. Most cities count their homeless population once annually by recruiting volunteers to go out in the middle of the night and count people who are on the streets, under bridges, and in public areas. HUD currently encourages all metropolitan cities to count their unsheltered population with the point-in-time method. They also provide a multitude of detailed steps that cities should follow in order to maximize effectiveness and accuracy in data collection. This report will discuss these practices further in a later section.

Auburn also uses this point-in-time counting method in collaboration with the City of Seattle and the rest of King County. This event takes place one night a year from 2 am to 5 am in the last ten days of January, during which approximately 130 teams of volunteers comb the streets to enumerate and evaluate homeless populations throughout the city as best as possible. They do not wake up any unsheltered

people. This method has been in place since 1980 and has not changed since. The most recent point-in-time count, also known as the One Night Count, took place on January 23, 2015 between 2:00am and 5:00am. A team of over 1,000 volunteers were sent out to count those living on the street, in cars, on busses, and in doorways in an attempt to gather updated information on the county's homeless population. For the neighborhoods surveyed, a "known areas" method was used, in which neighborhoods where homelessness is common were counted but other areas were left unassessed.
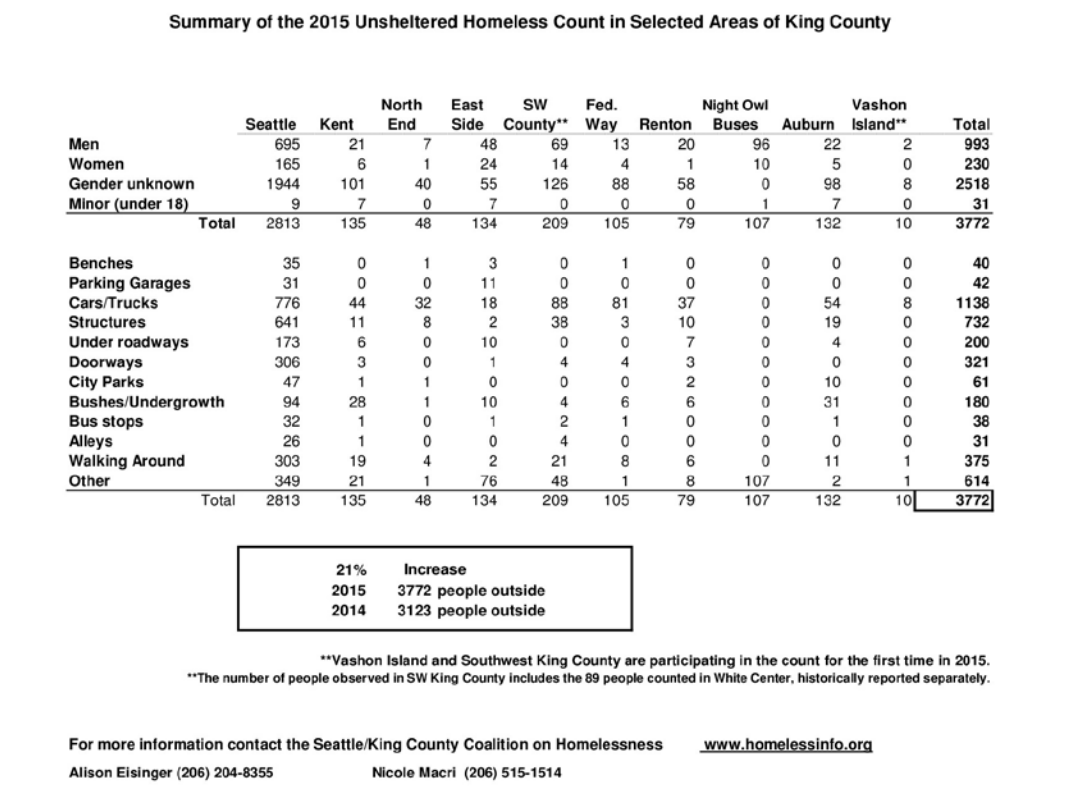

Summary of the 2015 Unsheltered Homeless Count in Selected Areas of King County

	Seattle	Kent	North End	East Side	SW County**	Fed. Way	Renton	Night Owl Buses	Auburn	Vashon Island**	Total
Men	695	21	7	48	69	13	20	96	22	2	993
Women	165	6	1	24	14	4	1	10	5	0	230
Gender unknown	1944	101	40	55	126	88	58	0	98	8	2518
Minor (under 18)	9	7	0	7	0	0	0	1	7	0	31
Total	2813	135	48	134	209	105	79	107	132	10	3772
Benches	35	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	40
Parking Garages	31	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	42
Cars/Trucks	776	44	32	18	88	81	37	0	54	8	1138
Structures	641	11	8	2	38	3	10	0	19	0	732
Under roadways	173	6	0	10	0	0	7	0	4	0	200
Doorways	306	3	0	1	4	4	3	0	0	0	321
City Parks	47	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	10	0	61
Bushes/Undergrowth	94	28	1	10	4	6	6	0	31	0	180
Bus stops	32	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	38
Alleys	26	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	31
Walking Around	303	19	4	2	21	8	6	0	11	1	375
Other	349	21	1	76	48	1	8	107	2	1	514
Total	2813	135	48	134	209	105	79	107	132	10	**3772**

21%	**Increase**	
2015	3772 people outside	
2014	3123 people outside	

**Vashon Island and Southwest King County are participating in the count for the first time in 2015.
**The number of people observed in SW King County includes the 89 people counted in White Center, historically reported separately.

For more information contact the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness   **www.homelessinfo.org**
Alison Eisinger (206) 204-8355   Nicole Macri (206) 515-1514

Credit: Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness,

The above image, courtesy of the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness, illustrates the results of the point-in-time count conducted in January of 2015. The sum of the homeless population is split into categories by gender, age, and observed location. It also shows the increase in number of homeless people from one year to the next. Auburn's counts have found an increase in the population every year since 2010 (Auburn Homeless Task Force).

The one-night count method has a few problematic facets. Homeless populations tend to fluctuate throughout the year as people transition in and out of housing, and the annual count has no manner of addressing this. While there is existing data for the number of unhoused individuals, it is very likely that the number is inaccurate given that there is a gap in assessment of people residing out of sight in cars, friends' apartments, in dense foliage, and on private property. Additionally, when not all census tracts are being observed, it is likely that some unsheltered homeless individuals will be excluded from the total number. While there is some information about the amount of people seen in cars and bushes, the sum total is

almost surely too low, as many members of the homeless population are skilled at remaining unseen due to potential legal ramifications. The count only takes place in January, which tends to be the coldest month of the year. In freezing temperatures, unsheltered people are more likely to sleep in places that are covered or hidden or to enter abandoned buildings, places Auburn's volunteers do not venture during the count. According to a recent Seattle Times article, "a more thorough tally could result in a much higher total" (Beekman 2016).

Auburn, along with most other American cities, only counts its homeless population once a year. There are many variables that could affect the count of homeless people on any given night, and a once annual count makes any comparisons across years highly unreliable. There is no way to assess whether a change in the size of the homeless population is actually being observed, or if some other factor, such as weather, caused a temporary shift. As a result, the collected data is unreliable and with unreliable data any conclusions drawn will likely be too incomplete to be considered accurate.

IF THIS INFORMATION WERE AVAILABLE, WE COULD COMPARE THE HOMELESS DISTRIBUTION WITH THE HOUSING DISTRIBUTION IN DIFFERENT CENSUS TRACTS OF AUBURN TO BETTER ESTIMATE AND FOCUS ON POCKETS WHERE A DENSER POPULATION IS PRESENT

The one-night count also does not take into account the distribution of homeless people across neighborhoods and in different locations throughout Auburn. By only counting "known areas," where homelessness is concentrated, it is unlikely that a complete count of the homeless population can ever be achieved. While larger groups may be more common in certain areas, it is almost certain that a few individuals, particularly ones who wish to remain out of site, are located in the neighborhoods which Auburn does not count. If this information were available, we could compare the homeless distribution with the housing distribution in different census tracts of Auburn to better estimate and focus on pockets where a denser population is present.

With these factors taken into account, we conclude that the current method of accounting for homeless populations in Auburn would likely benefit from a few changes to maximize efficiency and improve accuracy of information. Meteorological conditions alone can affect the number of visible homeless on the street on any given night. The lack of assessment of hidden or temporarily sheltered individuals, not counting in all Auburn census tracts, and the large length of time between counts combine to result in incomplete information derived from the current point-in-time method.

04 COUNTING METHODS ELSEWHERE

The next component of our goals is to find strategies currently being used by cities across the nation to contrast and compare their methods of counting and keeping track of their unsheltered populations. Unsheltered refers to the lack of general lawful access to a building to sleep in, this includes individuals living in cars, squatting in unoccupied buildings, and taking residence in short term emergency shelters. Each practice of counting will be analyzed in a manner similar to the way we have examined Auburn's counting methods. We examine other cities across the country and how they measure the size of their homeless population to collect ideas to improve how the City of Auburn could approach the task.

IT IS LIKELY THAT, WITH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, THE SCOPE OF INFORMATION ABOUT HOMELESSNESS WOULD IMPROVE. THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT FIRST STEP THAT COULD HELP AUBURN DESIGN POLICIES TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS WITH HIGHER EFFICACY

An important fact to note is that HUD encourages all cities in the United States to conduct their homeless counts at least once a year. Accordingly, most cities do not exceed this number, preferring to use the standard annual one-night count method.

The cities whose methods we examined include: Austin, TX; Los Angeles, CA; Sydney, Australia; Portland, OR; Chicago, IL; San Francisco, CA; New York City, NY; and Odense, Denmark.
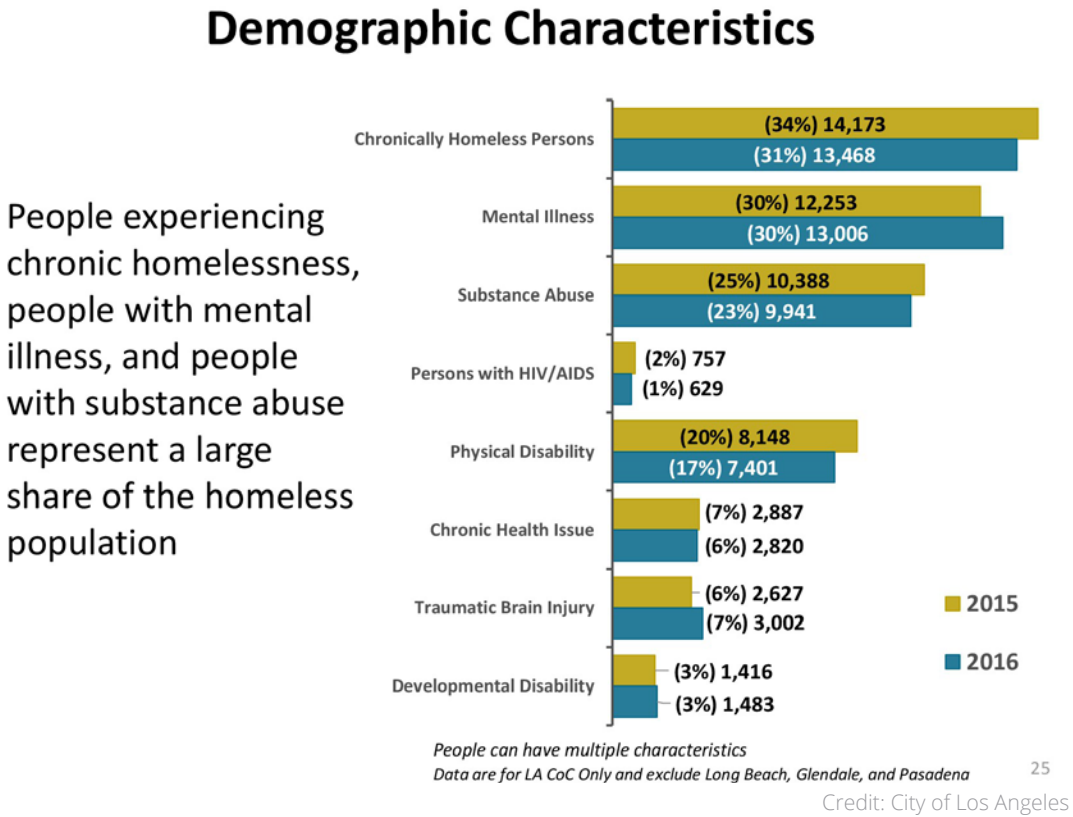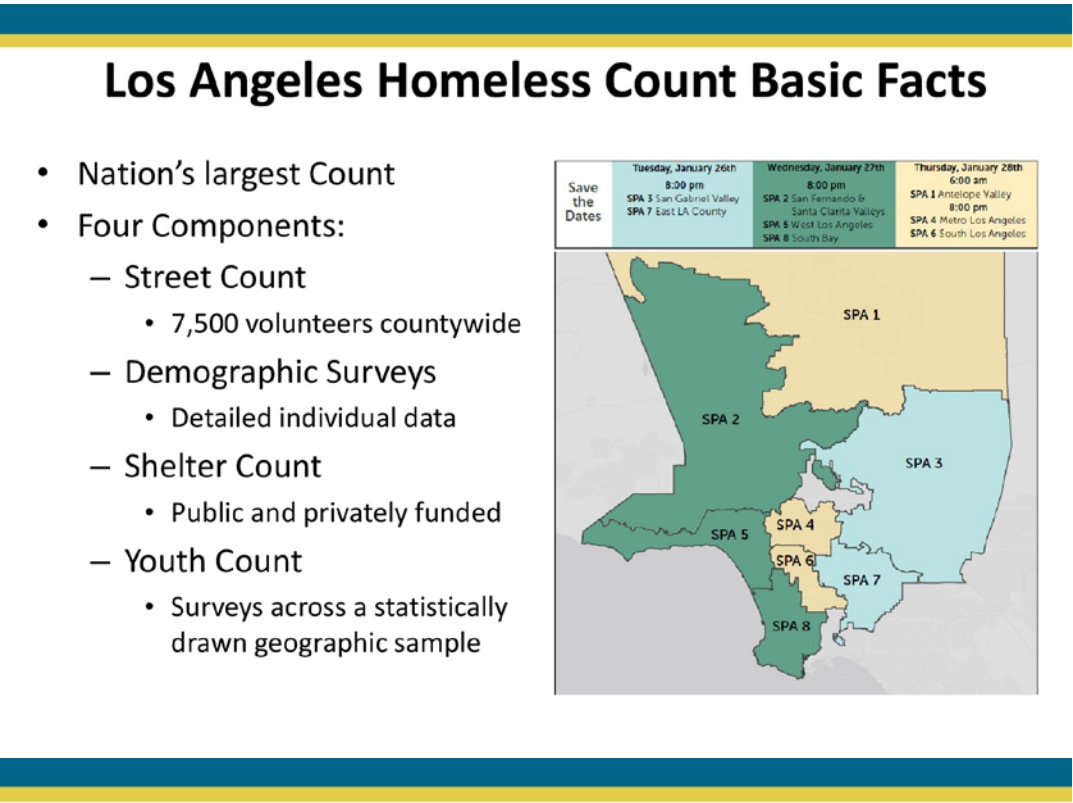
Austin, TX

In Austin, Texas and Travis County, the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) works to evaluate and end homelessness in the area. This organization, with the motto "Fiercely committed to ending homelessness in Austin," offers services to the homeless population as well as maintaining a website about current counts, trends in homelessness, and tracking affordable housing and its usage in hopes to understand who is becoming homeless and why (ECHO 2016). From available records, official counts of the homeless population happen only during the annual pointin-time done at the end of January, but the organization also promotes the event and recruits volunteers for these events in order to increase accuracy of the survey. The information from these counts is then used in conjunction with the tracking of affordable housing to create an estimate of the homeless population for the rest of the year. This estimation does not note any association to gender, whether or not they are individual or part of homeless families or if they have access to shelter or not. The trends reported by ECHO seem to follow the same narrative that Auburn's do, increasing at a very similar rate.

Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles, California is another city that participates in a point-in-time count, and it is also the largest count in the nation. Using over 7,500 volunteers countywide, the city divides its expansive reach into eight different territories where the count will be undertaken in four different components: a street count, a shelter count, a youth count, and demographic surveys. This approach, according to a study done by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, found the total estimated number of people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County in 2016 was 46,874; an overall increase of 2,515 people from the previous year (Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority 2016). Additionally, the study found that the number of sheltered homeless has been in a consistent decline while the number of unsheltered have risen. The study speculates that the potential causes of this are that, while the funding for shelter has increased in the past year, the actual number of beds in the shelters has decreased which turns an ever-increasing number of disadvantaged individuals out onto the street. The count done by the City of Los Angeles also takes into account the dimensions of gender, race, age, and other demographic characteristics such as mental illness, substance abuse, disability, and whether or not the individuals are chronically unhoused or not.

Los Angeles Homeless Count Basic Facts

- Nation's largest Count
- Four Components:
  - Street Count
    - 7,500 volunteers countywide
  - Demographic Surveys
    - Detailed individual data
  - Shelter Count
    - Public and privately funded
  - Youth Count
    - Surveys across a statistically drawn geographic sample

Demographic Characteristics

People experiencing chronic homelessness, people with mental illness, and people with substance abuse represent a large share of the homeless population

	2015	2016
Chronically Homeless Persons	(34%) 14,173	(31%) 13,468
Mental Illness	(30%) 12,253	(30%) 13,006
Substance Abuse	(25%) 10,388	(23%) 9,941
Persons with HIV/AIDS	(2%) 757	(1%) 629
Physical Disability	(20%) 8,148	(17%) 7,401
Chronic Health Issue	(7%) 2,887	(6%) 2,820
Traumatic Brain Injury	(6%) 2,627	(7%) 3,002
Developmental Disability	(3%) 1,416	(3%) 1,483

People can have multiple characteristics
Data are for LA CoC Only and exclude Long Beach, Glendale, and Pasadena

Credit: City of Los Angeles

San Francisco, CA

San Francisco conducts a more thorough version of the point-in-time count. The city utilizes three different approaches during the count, coming in three separate waves throughout the night. Between 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm, homeless youth participate in a count of the total number of other unsheltered youth. The general

street count occurs between 8:00 pm and 12:00 am, and the shelter count is completed by the next morning. During the shelter count, the homeless populations of emergency shelters, transitional housing, hospitals, and jails are accounted for. This multi-faceted approach leads to the collection of more complete data and creates a more accurate impression of the scope of homelessness in San Francisco.

San Francisco is not without its faults. Like many cities, volunteers are told not to speak to those they are counting for safety reasons, limiting those counting to rely exclusively on visual cues to determine homelessness. This is fairly simple when accounting for someone in a sleeping bag on the sidewalk, but in instances of people on the move or huddled together it is not as easy to categorize or accurately count the number of those without shelter in a given area. Individuals have to assume housing status purely from appearances, which "causes a big undercount," according to Jennifer Friedenbach, executive director of the San Francisco advocacy group Coalition on Homelessness (Palomino 2016).

Portland, OR

In Portland, Oregon, the homeless count is conducted every two years. The county in which Portland is located, Multnomah county, collaborates in a joint effort with over 150 organizations to survey and count the homeless population in the area. Information about the location of homeless encampments is gathered from local police bureaus, the Multnomah County Sheriff, Portland Parks and Recreation, and Oregon Department of Transportation. After locations are identified, outreach workers representing various organizations visit the encampments in order to gather information. During the week of the count, volunteers engage homeless individuals to gather information such as their race, where they sleep, if they slept in a group, and if they are employed or attending school. To avoid duplicates in counting, the survey also asked for the first three letters of their last name, first letter of first name, age, and gender. By surveying the homeless during counts, Portland is able to gather demographic information about the homeless in the area and map the locations across the city where the unsheltered are most likely to reside. This enables them to gather more accurate counts in the future and better understand the populations of people who are at risk of becoming homeless, but unfortunately by only counting once every two years there are likely large gaps in data and it is difficult to examine population changes more closely.

Chicago, IL

During Chicago's annual one-night count, surveys are distributed to available homeless people who show willingness to participate. Survey questions include inquiries into how long they have been homeless, the cause of their homelessness, substance abuse, former incarceration, and whether or not they have any

unsheltered family members (2016). The city broke the count's numbers up into 50 wards, each of which contained a few neighborhoods in the same area, in order to effectively examine where homelessness is concentrated. Additionally, for the first time since 2005, Chicago took stock of homeless youth in the area, collecting surveys from young individuals without stable housing. Homeless families and youth are on the rise; by counting and surveying them separately from the general homeless population it is possible to collect information that could be useful in preventing loss of housing for them.

New York City, NY

New York City is a municipality in which strategies for counting the homeless are somewhat unique. NYC has recognized a need for a change in their methods for assessing homelessness, and so they will be implementing a quarterly one-night count as of May 2017. Previously, they have employed an annual one-night count during the winter, which is a similar strategy to what we have seen in Auburn and many other American cities. New York City has recognized their lack of an accurate count of unsheltered persons, and experts have concluded that the number is likely a significant underestimation. One factor contributing to the underestimation is the fact that the one-night count does not account for the homeless who are sleeping in hidden locations (NYC Home Stat 2016). They hope a quarterly count can provide necessary information about the ebb and flow of homelessness throughout the year, and it is very possible that a quarterly count in Auburn could yield similar benefits.

New York City also has an app, "NYC 311," which can be downloaded to report a number of issues from food poisoning to traffic hazards. One of the categories is called "Homeless Assistance." When you click on it, a notice pops up which reads, "User alert: Call 911 if someone is in immediate danger." When you continue it prompts, "Where is the person?" and you can select a specific location on a map. This can provide the city with more information about where the largest amounts of homeless are concentrated. It can also give insight into changes in location of homeless populations throughout the year. The app then says, "This person is at or near:" and provides a variety of options for where the person is, such as in front of a house of worship, on the street, or in a park. Following this, there is a space that asks the user to give details about the person, such as age, race, and gender. Even if a small percentage of the population download and use this app, it can help provide a far more well-rounded view of the unsheltered homeless population in New York City. A similar strategy has the potential to be successful in the City of Auburn. It is likely that, with public participation, the scope of information about homelessness would improve. This is a very important first step that could help Auburn design policies to address homelessness with higher efficacy.

Sydney, AU

Internationally, Sydney, Australia conducts a one-night count of their homeless population twice a year in August and February (City of Sydney 2016). This is very similar to the way King County collects its data, but Sydney's bi-yearly count is able to take into account fluctuations in the homeless populations in different seasons and kinds of weather. This approach allows further insight into the population dynamics and if a seasonal dimension affects the homeless population. In the collected data we see more "rough sleepers" (individuals sleeping on the physical street) being counted in August as opposed to February, which is surprising given the difference in the forecast for the two months and the difficulties associated with being unsheltered in the winter (June through August in Australia). Interestingly, we do not see nearly as much of a correlation when it comes to occupied hostel beds. From August to February the amount of occupied beds seems to fluctuate but not according to any visible pattern, some years there are more occupied bed sleepers in February as opposed to August, other years the inverse holds true.

Odense, DK

In Europe, Odense, the third-largest Danish city, utilized GPS trackers to count and observe the movement of the homeless with relative success. To start, a group of 20 homeless people voluntarily agreed to carry a GPS tracker in their pocket for one week (Busch-Geertsema 2015, O'Sullivan 2014). The names of the people carrying each specific tracker are not made known in order to provide privacy for the study participants. As a reward for their involvement, each of the homeless individuals were provided with vouchers for hot meals. With the trackers, Odense was able to map the locations visited by the participants and gather data about frequency of movement, concentrations of marginalized populations throughout the day, and common sleeping places.

This approach shows ambition that goes beyond most cities' wish to count and site homeless populations. This knowledge can be used to analyze movement and discern if any pattern of movement occurs. This approach allows the city where the unsheltered sleep, if it is consistent or circumstantial, and if an individual consistently maintains their sleeping location night to night. With more complete knowledge of these things, Odense may be better able to account for their unsheltered population, understand their movements, as well as find optimal locations for social services to provide assistance to disadvantaged persons.

participates in a one-night count means procedures and practices are currently in place which will be easy to reproduce. There will need to be an adequate volunteer population willing to be involved in the count seasonally as opposed to yearly. As most cities only carry out the point-in-time count once a year, data about how the number of homeless people fluctuates throughout the year is very limited. We have reason to believe that in order to gain knowledge of this issue, Auburn would need to count the homeless population more frequently.

Unsheltered Volunteers

Our next suggestion details why the ease and accuracy of the one-night count could be improved by including unsheltered volunteers. Their knowledge of locations and customs stand to benefit everyone involved. Recruitment can be made simple by distributing fliers and increasing awareness about the role of volunteers in the count. King County's plans for including unsheltered volunteers during the January 2017 count can be used a model for future counts and will hopefully provide new information regarding how their inclusion affects the counting process.

We believe that, paired with the quarterly counts, Auburn should consider hiring or recruiting unsheltered individuals to be engaged in the counting process. Using currently unhoused or formerly unhoused individuals to assist with the one-night count has a few potential benefits. People with lived experience with homelessness have a superior understanding of unspoken rules and customs amongst the homeless community, and as a result can provide assistance to volunteers during the count in their efforts to reach out to the homeless safely, ethically, and responsibly. Those with prior experience with homelessness will also know places where the unsheltered are likely to stay during the night. During the count, they may also be allowed access to places where others are not generally welcome. Volunteers with such lived experience can be assigned to count in an area in which they currently or previously resided without shelter. By assigning neighborhoods this way, the volunteers may have knowledge of streets, services, and public areas most commonly accessed by other individuals in the vicinity.

COUNTING FOUR TIMES A YEAR WOULD ENABLE AUBURN TO COMPILE DATA WITH HIGHER RATES OF ACCURACY AND PRODUCE MORE POINTS OF COMPARISON WITH WHICH TO STUDY CHANGES IN THE SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE UNSHELTERED POPULATION

05 SUGGESTIONS

Quarterly Count

Auburn currently participates in an annual One Night Count in order to assess the size and distribution of the homeless population, but by only doing this once a year, the city is limiting knowledge of changes in size during different seasons. In order to remedy this, it is logical to suggest implementing additional counts each year. Counting four times a year would enable Auburn to compile data with higher rates of accuracy and produce more points of comparison with which to study changes in the size and distribution of the unsheltered population.

Implementing four counts a year will produce more accurate numbers of the homeless population across the whole year as numbers of unsheltered people fluctuate. To facilitate the organization of the more frequent counts, the committee should choose a consistent time to meet, such as every solstice and equinox or the first Saturday of every January, April, July, and October. This creates an even spread of seasons and provides an easy-to-remember meeting time for volunteers and city officials. We have come to the conclusion that multiple counts a year will produce more accurate data distribution of the homeless population, this may be of critical benefit for the city's capability to intervene in homelessness given that Auburn and the Puget Sound are facing substantial population growth.

During these counts it would make sense to map where unsheltered people are found in order to develop a better understanding of the distribution of homelessness. There are a few challenges to our idea. Given that Auburn already

If utilized, this approach could be of great help to the counting efforts by the capability with which volunteers are able to identify unsheltered individuals through solely visual means. Working with individuals familiar with living without permanent shelter may serve to generate a more accurate count in the city. It is likely that they would be best prepared to visually identify a homeless individual and provide key insights into unsheltered communities. For Auburn, this could help combat the gap in numbers for people residing out of sight in cars, friends' apartments, in dense foliage, and on private property as their experiences may be essential to Auburn's ability to collectively better account for and understand the dynamics of communities without permanent shelter.

There are a few ways participation can be encouraged. A few months prior to the count, Auburn can reach out to programs that assist the homeless and notify them of a need for formerly or currently unsheltered participants. These organizations can provide insight as to who is best able to assist.

Another option is to advertise for participants by placing fliers or posters in and around areas known for being frequented by unsheltered individuals or communities. The flier would contain information about the time of the count, why it is important, and how the they can help. It could also include mention of some kind of incentive for participation, such as food vouchers or an hourly salary. This yields a method of reaching out to those who are not living in shelters or accessing resources, adding a dimension of help on top of the necessity of the count itself. These fliers can also be given to food banks and churches that assist those without permanent shelter, who can then distribute them to those that access services there.

Auburn can also host an event for the unsheltered community, such as a pizza night, barbeque, or similar outreach event. This can be advertised as a free event open to anyone who is currently homeless or has struggled with homelessness in the past. At the event, information about the need for the assistance of homeless volunteers during the one-night count. People who are interested in aiding can write down their names and phone number, if available, on a list and be provided with the time and place of the next organizational meeting.

In King County, starting January 2017, the All Home organization will be implementing a similar method with homeless volunteers. According to a report of their plans (All Home 2016), the hired individuals must have current or past experience with homelessness and will be paid $15.00 an hour to lead a group of people in the count of a census tract in which they experienced homelessness. It is too early to see if this approach will yield better results but, in theory, it should provide a more accurate count for the City of Seattle.

A few challenges to this plan could include a lack of participation and volunteer skepticism, as many people are wary of openly discussing their current lack of housing due to fears of law enforcement. This will be the biggest hurdle in administering this idea, but if that can be overcome and involvement of individuals with experience in homelessness occurs, then we anticipate that the program should have success so long as outreach is done responsibly, safely, and ethically. Essential to this approach is that, regardless of what avenue for outreach is chosen

neither potential participants or those being counted will be punished. As far as funding for this project, the only additional costs to consider would be the price of incentives for volunteers amongst the current or formerly homeless individuals and the advertisement or outreach to the homeless population before each count night, which could be as minimal as strategically located fliers.

Surveys

Another way Auburn can get more specific information about the homeless population is to distribute surveys. Surveying is a simple and effective way to ascertain self-reported data concerning causes of unstable housing, duration of homelessness, employment, and preferred sleeping locations. Well-rounded knowledge of such matters can enable Auburn to obtain more accurate counts of homeless populations in the future and provide indicators of key points and types of productive intervention.

The surveys can be distributed to unsheltered people at places such as food banks, shelters, or church events. They can be given to each person who attends. The survey could prompt the respondent to write down their initials instead of full name. This would provide privacy which could make many people feel more comfortable filling the survey out, but asking for initials helps to mitigate duplicate counts. To count the frequency with which disadvantaged people access services, a sheet can be set up for them to write down their initials and age if they have already filled out the survey in the past 6 months. Ideally, the survey distributed in these settings would be short in order to increase efficiency and the total number of respondents. A sample survey might look as follows:

Initials: _____

Gender: ___ M ___ F

Age: _____

Race/Ethnicity: ___ White ___ African American ___ Native American

___ Asian/Pacific Islander ___ Hispanic/Latino ___ Other

1) How long have you been homeless?

2) Have you ever lived in a homeless shelter?

3) Do you have any homeless family members? If so, how many?

4) Where did you live before you became homeless (city, neighborhood)?

5) Why did you become homeless?

6) Are you employed? If not, when was the last time you were employed?

This set of questions, while not comprehensive, would provide Auburn with a basic set of information about the demographics of the homelessness, the most common lengths of time spent struggling with unstable housing, and common events that cause a loss of housing. It is important to understand all of these in order to create a more accurate image of homelessness in Auburn.

A more in-depth, comprehensive survey can also be created. The questions on this survey would be expanded to include a large variety of factors that are also important to consider when studying homelessness. As an example, Denver, CO's survey asks in-depth questions about location of residence, reasons for becoming homeless, places stayed on specific nights, and homeless family members. The city's survey can be seen in Figures 4 and 5. Auburn can build upon this model by including inquiries into any involvement in the armed forces, recurrence of homelessness, use of consciousness-altering substances, experience of domestic violence, and history of accessing of public services. All these questions reflect important aspects of homelessness which Auburn currently does not have comprehensive insight into.

BY IMPLEMENTING THESE SURVEYS, AUBURN IS LIKELY TO GAIN IMPORTANT NEW INFORMATION ABOUT MANY FACETS OF HOMELESSNESS AND WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO UNDERSTAND STRUGGLES SPECIFIC TO THE AREA

These comprehensive surveys, as they will take more time to complete, are ideal for situations in which groups of volunteers have time to converse with homeless folk. The surveys can be administered at events held for the homeless population, such as the food gatherings we suggested in the section about using volunteers with a history of living without consistent shelter. Such an event can afford an opportunity to discuss housing situations and homelessness more in-depth by providing a comfortable atmosphere in which to ask and record a more involved and personal conversation. The one-night count may also be a pertinent time for interviews as there is reduced fear of law enforcement interfering. Consequently, some people may feel more comfortable discussing the circumstances of their housing.

Using this tactic would not be difficult to implement and Auburn stands to gain knowledge about homeless individuals from their own perspectives. The financial cost of putting these surveys into effect would be very low, and the two versions would provide useful, detailed information. The persistent challenge will be assessing the population of unsheltered people that do not want anyone to know they are presently homeless, as they will likely not come to food banks or use similar programs. They are likely people who are left out of the total homeless population as they may make an effort to stay hidden. By implementing these surveys, Auburn is likely to gain a important new information about many facets of homelessness and will be better able to understand struggles specific to the area.

Credit: City of Denver

Denver Survey Form (cont.)

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

10. How do you define your gender?
1 ☐ Male
2 ☐ Female
3 ☐ Transgender

11. What is your racial background?
1 ☐ Asian
2 ☐ Native American/Alaskan Native
3 ☐ Black/African American
4 ☐ White
5 ☐ Other_____

12. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic (Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano)?
1 ☐ Yes, Hispanic
2 ☐ No, Non-Hispanic

13. Please check the reasons why you became homeless (check all that apply):
☐ unemployment
☐ unable to pay rent/mortgage
☐ moved to seek work
☐ family member or personal illness
☐ alcohol/substance abuse
☐ mental disabilities
☐ physical disabilities
☐ domestic violence
☐ child abuse (youth on their own)
☐ discharge from prison/jail
☐ welfare assistance sanctions
☐ welfare payments not adequate
☐ welfare time limits
☐ bad credit history
☐ reasons related to sexual orientation
☐ other: _____

14. Have you ever received, or are you currently receiving treatment or services for any of the conditions below? (Please check all that apply.)
☐ severe mental illness   ☐ chronic alcohol abuse
☐ chronic drug abuse   ☐ tuberculosis
☐ HIV/AIDS related illnesses ☐ other physical condition
☐ not applicable, haven't received or receiving any services

15. Have you ever been in the U.S. military?
1 ☐ No   2 ☐ Yes

16. Do you have a job?
1 ☐ No
2 ☐ Yes --> How many hours a week do you work? _____

17. From which of the following sources do you get income/resources? (Check all that apply)
1 ☐ job   9 ☐ TANF/Colorado Works
2 ☐ family or friends   10 ☐ SSI (Social Security)
3 ☐ food stamps   11 ☐ Veteran's Benefits
4 ☐ social security   12 ☐ selling blood/plasma
5 ☐ pension   13 ☐ prostitution
6 ☐ unemployment   14 ☐ Aid to Needy Disabled (AND)
7 ☐ child support   15 ☐ Old Age Pension (OAP)t
8 ☐ asking for money on streets 16 ☐ Medicaid
17 ☐ other: _____

18. What was your annual household income in the year 2002? (Check the closest estimate)
1 ☐ $0.00   8 ☐ $12,500 - $14,999
2 ☐ up to $1,000   9 ☐ $15,000 - $19,999
3 ☐ $1,000 - $2,499   10 ☐ $20,000 - $29,999
4 ☐ $2,500 - $4,999   11 ☐ $30,000 - $39,999
5 ☐ $5,000 - $7,888   12 ☐ $40,000 - $49,999
6 ☐ $8,000 - $9,999   13 ☐ $50,000 or more
7 ☐ $10,000 - $12,499

19. Which of the following best describes your family/household? (Please check only one.)
1 ☐ I am a single individual (do not answer any more questions)
2 ☐ two parent family with children
3 ☐ one parent family with children
4 ☐ couple without children
5 ☐ other type of family

20. How many total people are in your family/household (including yourself)? _____

21. How many children aged 18 or under are in your family/household? _____

22. How many adults are in your family? _____

23. For each family member (NOT including yourself), please tell us his or her age, gender, and relationship to yourself.

Person #2 (not you)	Person #3 (not you)	Person #4 (not you)	Person #5 (not you)	Person #6 (not you)
Name or Initials ___	Name or Initials ___	Name or Initials ___	Name or Initials ___	Name or Initials ___
Age (in years) ___	Age (in years) ___	Age (in years) ___	Age (in years) ___	Age (in years) ___
Gender: 1☐ Male 2☐ Female 3☐ Transgender	Gender: 1☐ Male 2☐ Female 3☐ Transgender	Gender: 1☐ Male 2☐ Female 3☐ Transgender	Gender: 1☐ Male 2☐ Female 3☐ Transgender	Gender: 1☐ Male 2☐ Female 3☐ Transgender
Relationship to you: 1☐ Child 2☐ Spouse 3☐ Partner 4☐ Other family member	Relationship to you: 1☐ Child 2☐ Spouse 3☐ Partner 4☐ Other family member	Relationship to you: 1☐ Child 2☐ Spouse 3☐ Partner 4☐ Other family member	Relationship to you: 1☐ Child 2☐ Spouse 3☐ Partner 4☐ Other family member	Relationship to you: 1☐ Child 2☐ Spouse 3☐ Partner 4☐ Other family member

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Credit: City of Denver

Assessment of Free and Reduced Lunch

This method is related to the proposal to distribute surveys, but instead the aim is to assess the numbers of the precariously housed and/or fed. Free and reduced lunch in the school system gives low-income families an opportunity to reduce financial strain. The number of homeless students in Washington state has increased for the past six years in a row. A 47.3% increase in the number of homeless students was seen in the 2012-2013 school year when compared with the 2007-2008 school year.

One method Auburn could use to assess the at-risk population is by taking a count of the number of families that use the reduced cost lunch programs in public schools. The main goal of these programs is to provide the opportunity for families struggling with finances to reduce some costs. According to the National School Lunch Program (2013), "children from families with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130% and 185%of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals, for which students can be charged no more than 40 cents." These low income families are consistently most likely to become homeless; by examining the number of children qualifying for free and reduced lunches Auburn can gain a more thorough understanding of the scope of people who could become homeless if unexpected costs were to arise. With this, Auburn would also have the opportunity to locate schools with the highest number of children using free and reduced lunch in order

SURVEYING HOMELESS YOUTH, COMMUNICATING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF FOSTER SERVICES, AND REDUCING THE STIGMA AROUND HOMELESSNESS CAN HELP AUBURN REACH OUT TO AND CARE FOR YOUTH WITHOUT SHELTER

to see the neighborhoods with the greatest concentration of poverty and where families are most precariously housed. A concerning portion of the homeless are children, many of whom are likely living with homeless family members. The City of Auburn can communicate with schools to find out how many people access this help throughout the year. In addition to the count of families using free and reduced lunch, optional surveys could be included in applications to the program. A survey accompanying the application could ask questions regarding things such as monthly food and housing costs, approximate checking account balance, assets, and if they have a plan or resources if an unforeseen financial emergency were to happen.

There are no real barriers other than the fact that participation may be low if the survey were optional rather than mandatory. The city would have to delegate the job of reviewing these surveys to a paid employee which would require some, but minimal funding.

PIT Count Youth Survey (Comprehensive)

Hello, my name is _____. Today we are asking youth some questions to better understand their housing status. It is up to you whether you want to participate, and your answers will not be shared with anyone outside of our team. **Can I have about 10 minutes of your time?** ☐ Yes **[Go to Q1]** ☐No **[Thank respondent; go to observation tool]**

1. How old are you?
☐ Under 18 ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25 and older **[Switch to Adult survey; begin with Q3]**

2. Where did you sleep on the night of [NIGHT OF COUNT]?

UNSHELTERED
- ☐ Street or sidewalk
- ☐ Vehicle (car, van, RV, truck)
- ☐ Park or other public outdoor space
- ☐ Abandoned or empty building/squatting
- ☐ Bus, train station, airport
- ☐ Under bridge/overpass
- ☐ Outdoor encampment
- ☐ Other location (specify): _____

SHELTERED
- ☐ Emergency shelter
- ☐ Transitional housing
- ☐ Runaway Homeless Youth Program (TLP/MGH)
- ☐ Youth shelter

NOT HOMELESS
- ☐ Motel/hotel
- ☐ House or apartment
- ☐ Jail, hospital, treatment program

[If respondent answers with any of these, thank them for their time, and do not continue with survey.]

3. Can you tell me all the places you slept in the past week?
- ☐ Street or sidewalk
- ☐ Vehicle (car, van, RV, truck)
- ☐ Park or other public outdoor space
- ☐ Abandoned/empty building/squatting
- ☐ Bus, train station, airport
- ☐ Under bridge/overpass
- ☐ Outdoor encampment
- ☐ Other location (specify below):
- ☐ Emergency shelter
- ☐ Transitional housing
- ☐ Runaway Homeless Youth Program (TLP/MGH)
- ☐ Youth shelter
- ☐ Motel/hotel
- ☐ House or apartment
- ☐ Jail, hospital, treatment program

_____

4. Did another volunteer or survey worker already ask you these same questions about where you are staying tonight?
☐ No ☐ Yes → Thank you! Those are all the questions I have

5. What is your race? You can select one or more races. [Read all except 'please specify']
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ White
- ☐ Don't Know/Refuse to Answer
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other (specify below): _____

6. Are you Hispanic or Latino?
- ☐ Yes, Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ No, not Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Don't Know/Refuse to Answer

7. How would you define your gender?
- ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender (M→F) ☐ Transgender (F→M)
- ☐ Don't identify as male, female, or transgender ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

8. How long have you been homeless this time? Think about only time spent staying in shelters and/or on the streets.
☐ ____ Days ☐ ____ Weeks ☐ ____ Months ☐ ____ Years
☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

9. Is this the first time that you have been living on the street, in a shelter, or transitional housing program?
☐ Yes [Skip to Q12] ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

10. Including this time, how many separate times have you been homeless (living on the street or in a shelter) in the past three years, that is, since January 2014? Was it 4 or more times or less than 4 times?
☐ Less than 4 times ☐ 4 or more times ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

11. If you add up all the times you have been homeless in the last 3 years, about how long have you been homeless? Your best guess is fine.
☐ ____ Days ☐ ____ Weeks ☐ ____ Months ☐ ____ Years
☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

12. Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?
- ☐ Lesbian or gay ☐ Straight ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Something else ☐ I don't know ☐ I'd rather not say

13. [If female:] Are you currently pregnant? [If male or 'other':] Are you expecting to become a parent in the next 9 months?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

Credit: LCY Student Team

FIGURE 6:
SAMPLE SURVEY FOR THE CITY OF AUBURN PAGE 1

Gathering Information About Homeless Youth

Auburn can expand the number of ways they can help residents by considering the volume of unhoused youth in the overall homeless population. With large numbers of unsheltered minors in Washington, new policies such as surveying homeless youth, communicating with representatives of foster services, and reducing the stigma around homelessness can help Auburn reach out to and care for youth without shelter.

Youth homelessness is an issue of vital importance, yet very little information has been collected in America, and the City of Auburn is no exception. The number of homeless youth in Washington state has been increasing steadily for several years. During the 2014 - 2015 school year alone, the statewide homeless population of schoolchildren grew by 9.1%. During the 2012 - 2013 school year, the total number of homeless schoolchildren was 32,494, or 3.1%of Washington's total population of students (Dyer and Green 2014). This information was collected by school districts' reports of how many children from preschool to 12th grade lacked a fixed, reliable nighttime residence.

Auburn's current method of counting leaves room for improvement in accounting for homeless youth. While they do have collected data for the number of homeless

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[If under 18 (Q1 = less than 18), skip to Q17]

14. Have you ever served in the US Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard)?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

15. Were you ever called into active duty as a member of the National Guard or as a Reservist?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

16. Have you ever received health care or benefits from a Veterans Administration Medical Center?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

17. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have [If female:] 4 or more drinks of alcohol in a row / [If male:] 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row?
☐ 0 days ☐ 1 day ☐ 2 days ☐ 3 to 5 days
☐ 6 to 9 days ☐ 10 to 19 days ☐ 20+ days ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

18. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use marijuana on your own – that is without a doctor telling you to?
☐ 0 days ☐ 1 day ☐ 2 days ☐ 3 to 5 days
☐ 6 to 9 days ☐ 10 to 19 days ☐ 20+ days ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

19. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use other illicit drugs or substances on your own – that is without a doctor telling you to?
☐ 0 days ☐ 1 day ☐ 2 days ☐ 3 to 5 days
☐ 6 to 9 days ☐ 10 to 19 days ☐ 20+ days ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

20. Do you have any physical disabilities?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

21. Have you ever received special education services from school at any point for more than 6 months?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

22. Have you ever received services, or felt like you needed help with your mental health?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

23. Do you have HIV/AIDS or have you had any related illness?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

24. Have any of the issues we just discussed (alcohol or drug use, physical or mental disabilities, your mental health, learning difficulties, or HIV/AIDS) ever kept you from getting a job or obtaining or staying in stable housing?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

25. Do you receive a disability check, such as a Social Security check (SSI or SSDI) or a Veteran Disability Compensation check?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

26. Have you ever been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused by a relative or another person you have stayed with, such as a spouse, partner, brother or sister, or parent?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

[For Q27-29: Only ask 'Part B' if answer is 'Yes']

27. Have you ever been placed in foster care or stayed in a group home?
☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer ☐ Yes

25B. If you left [SETTING] in the past 3 years, did anyone help you get housing?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not in past 3 years ☐ Don't know / Refused to answer

28. Have you stayed overnight or longer in jail, prison, or a juvenile detention facility?
☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer ☐ Yes

26B. If you left [SETTING] in the past 3 years, did anyone help you get housing?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not in past 3 years ☐ Don't know / Refused to answer

29. Have you stayed overnight or longer in a treatment or healthcare facility?
☐ No ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer ☐ Yes

27B. If you left [SETTING] in the past 3 years, did anyone help you get housing?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not in past 3 years ☐ Don't know / Refused to answer

30. Are you currently enrolled in school?
- ☐ Yes, and attend regularly
- ☐ Yes, suspended
- ☐ No, obtained GED
- ☐ No, dropped out within last 6 months
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes, and attend irregularly
- ☐ No, graduated from high school
- ☐ No, expelled
- ☐ No, dropped out 6 months ago or more
- ☐ Refused

Credit: LCY Student Team

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31. What is the highest grade or level of schooling you completed?
- ☐ Less than 5th grade
- ☐ 5th to 6th grade
- ☐ 7th to 8th grade
- ☐ 9th to 11th grade
- ☐ 12th grade
- ☐ School program does not have grade levels
- ☐ GED completion
- ☐ Some post-secondary education/college
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Refuse to answer

32. In the past year, in what ways did you make money? [Select all that apply]
- ☐ Full-time job
- ☐ Part-time job including on-call or irregular hours
- ☐ Working under the table
- ☐ Money from friends or family
- ☐ Hustling
- ☐ Panhandling
- ☐ Sex work
- ☐ Government program (disability, welfare, food stamps, unemployment, etc.)
- ☐ Other (specify): _____
- ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

33. Think about the last time you felt that you were living in safe and stable housing. How long ago was that?
- ☐ Less than 1 month ago
- ☐ 1 month to less than 3 months ago
- ☐ 3 months to less than 6 months ago
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ More than 1 year
- ☐ Never felt stably housed [Skip to Q36]
- ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

34. Who did you live with the last time you lived in stable housing?
- ☐ Family member ☐ Friend(s)/roommate(s)
- ☐ Partner/significant other ☐ Alone
- ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

35. What is the primary reason you left or lost your last stable housing situation?
- ☐ Chose to leave ☐ Forced to leave
- ☐ Don't know ☐ Refuse to answer

36. In order to stay in any housing situation, have you ever...? [Select all that apply]
- ☐ Stayed with someone you didn't know or trust
- ☐ Stayed somewhere that didn't feel safe
- ☐ Stayed with a sexual partner that you would not have otherwise
- ☐ Stayed on a couch or floor for longer than one week
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Refuse to answer

37. In the past year, what services or supports, for example from government programs or charities, have you accessed? [Select all that apply]
- ☐ Free meals
- ☐ Transportation assistance or bus passes
- ☐ Job training or employment services
- ☐ Drop-in/day services
- ☐ Legal assistance
- ☐ Health services
- ☐ Mental health services
- ☐ Substance abuse treatment/services
- ☐ Housing services
- ☐ Education services
- ☐ Other (specify): _____
- ☐ None
- ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

38. In the past year, what issues have you encountered in trying to get help or access services? [Select all that apply]
- ☐ Lack of transportation
- ☐ Did not have ID/personal documents
- ☐ Did not know where to go for help
- ☐ Did not qualify for service
- ☐ Placed on a waitlist and never heard back
- ☐ Language barrier
- ☐ Could not access because of age
- ☐ No issues accessing services/assistance
- ☐ Other (specify): _____
- ☐ Don't know / Refuse to answer

Those are all the questions we have for you. We realize that some of the topics covered are personal and can be difficult to talk about. As a reminder your responses will not be shared with anyone outside of our team. Thank you for taking the survey and being a part of this important data collection effort.

Credit: LCY Student Team

FIGURES 7 & 8: SAMPLE SURVEY FOR THE CITY OF AUBURN PAGES 2 &3

minors, there is little other information about how they ended up without housing, and similarly to the count of the rest of homeless population, the numbers are likely lower than the actual population of homeless youth. There are a few things that can be done to improve the count of homeless youth throughout the city.

Homelessness carries a social stigma that is more than likely to make many teens and children reluctant to seek out public assistance. Many youths may try to hide their lack of stable housing in order to avoid drawing unwanted attention to themselves and prevent bullying, leaving many without services that could help them. HUD (2016) has recommended that cities approach the important topic of homelessness carefully when discussing housing with youth. Schools can designate a social worker or a teacher sensitive to these issues as a source of support and information that students can feel safe coming to. Avoiding the word "homeless" and instead focusing the discussion on current housing situations would reduce the reluctance to talk about shelter caused by social stigma. If students know they have an understanding adult to reach out to, they may be more willing to disclose their family's struggle with inconsistent housing. As a result, the homeless student counts by school district are likely to increase and more accurately reflect the current state of youth homelessness.

During the one-night count, volunteers can approach any homeless individuals who appear to be under the age of 25 and ask them to participate in a survey. By only counting the number of homeless youth on sight and not speaking to them, Auburn is missing an opportunity to gather information about those who are most likely to find themselves without reliable housing. HUD has released a sample comprehensive youth survey that can be utilized during the point-in-time counts

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BY ONLY COUNTING THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS YOUTH ON SIGHT AND NOT SPEAKING TO THEM, AUBURN IS MISSING AN OPPORTUNITY TO GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT THOSE WHO ARE MOST LIKELY TO FIND THEMSELVES WITHOUT RELIABLE HOUSING

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that could be easily adapted for the City of Auburn. This survey asks questions such as the respondent's age, race, gender, armed forces service, school enrollment, access of services, mental health, and physical health. The full survey can be seen in Figures 6, 7, and 8. Auburn volunteers can avoid using the word "homeless" and instead ask youth on the streets to answer a few questions about their current housing situation, which could encourage greater participation from those who are uncomfortable with the stigma of homelessness. Asking these questions will give Auburn an opportunity to learn more about the unsheltered youth of the area and discover how many have been struggling with unstable housing.

A significant number of foster children go on to experience homelessness. A study from the Children and Youth Project by Columbia Legal, a law firm that advocates for those facing injustice and misfortune, found that, "In Washington State, within

one year of exiting care, 35% of foster youth experience homelessness" (Shah et al. 2013). The same study also found that many former foster youths find temporary shelter in their former care home (29%) and with friends and family members (26%). As foster children are very prone to becoming unsheltered, Auburn can gain information about this population of at-risk youth by communicating with social services about any children formerly in the system who appear to be having difficulty obtaining stable housing. An arrangement can be made where, perhaps two to four times a year, social services provides Auburn with its current count of youths formerly in the foster system who are having difficulty obtaining stable housing. More accurate information about the percentage of foster youth in the homeless population can be achieved by designating a section of the survey questions to the issue specifically. Without an accurate count it is not possible to know the extent of the challenges of homelessness amongst youth aging out of foster care, keeping track of the situation will enable the development of stronger policies that may help them.

Mobile App

Another proposed idea is the implementation of a free mobile app. This app, if used and promoted responsibly and ethically, has the potential to provide Auburn with specific data on visible homelessness throughout the city at any given time. The city could use data collected through the app to gain additional information about who is most affected by a loss of housing, which can be used to increase efficacy in reaching out to and providing services to the unsheltered.

Using New York City's 311 app as a model could provide multiple benefits to Auburn in its effort to account for and better serve the homeless population. With the current one-night count system in Auburn there is no way to identify the age or race of the unsheltered, but NYC 311 app reports containing this information have given New York City insight to the populations who are most prone to homelessness. The app has also provided very specific information about the locations facilitating efforts to map the distribution of the unsheltered throughout the city. Auburn could potentially see a similar broadening of knowledge with the use of such an app.

Auburn's app could be made available to all residents for free download and would provide the opportunity to report a number of public issues, potentially well beyond homelessness. These could range from the ability to report a driving hazard to reporting a park or other public space that needs maintenance. When the user of the app goes to report the sighting of a potentially unsheltered person, several possible prompts would appear. The first and most important of these would be to prompt the user to call 911 if a person is in need of immediate medical assistance. If there is no emergency, the user would then be asked to log the location of the person on a map. Location data from this would not be seen by the general public but rather entered directly into a distribution map for Auburn's city officials. Other possibilities could include requesting that the user describe the characteristics of

the person (e.g. age, race, gender) and say what the person is near (i.e. in a park, under a bridge, outside of a church). It is possible that the portion of the app concerning homelessness could include an "About" tab, which would outline the goals and intentions to help unsheltered people by better knowing where services are most needed. This would increase awareness concerning homelessness and encourage a sense of community and goodwill. While the possibility for public participation through an app-based platform offers potential benefits, the program would have to be monitored for ethical use to ensure that unsheltered populations were not being unfairly targeted. Some members of the public may think the app might be a tool for identifying people they would expect the city to punish which could help to create an uncomfortable atmosphere of surveillance, sowing distrust by further marginalizing disenfranchised people.

However, the app could also be used by more than those with permanent housing. Those experiencing homelessness, or is in some way disadvantaged, could use an option within the app to, "Help me find a service." When selecting this, a list of community services would appear along with the locations, phone numbers, and descriptions of each. Auburn's resource guide, as seen in Figures 9 and 10, is organized into sections with titles such as senior services, children's/youth Services, food, and more. For the sake of consistency, all the same categories can be used in the mobile app. A search function can also be added to make it more user-friendly.

Auburn currently has a somewhat conceptually similar program called "Citizen Reporting." A small icon on Auburn's city website prompts users to either file a

non-emergency police report or request a service from the city. Issues that can be reported this way include suspicious activity, defamation of public property, broken street lights, and abandoned shopping carts. On this part of the website, mention is made of an app called YourGOV that can be used to report public concerns. Unfortunately, these alone are not sufficient enough to be used to better account for unsheltered communities throughout the city. As of now, there is no way to collect consistently updated location data of the unsheltered in any way. By transitioning from a mobile app used by multiple cities to an independently-run app, Auburn would have the opportunity to customize the reportable options to those most relevant to the city, and access location data for official use. An app tailored to the city would also provide the opportunity to clarify Auburn's mission to help the area's homeless population and raise local awareness of efforts to combat the issue.

One potential barrier to implementing this method is the cost of creating an effective mobile app. It might be possible to save money by hiring students in technology fields to collaborate on creating an app for the city. Local businesses could also advertise in the app itself to ensure that it can remain free for users. Another potential issue is participation of residents of the city. Auburn can encourage residents to download and use the app in order to identify arenas where improvements can be made and implement them effectively. Auburn could also consider introducing an incentive, such as a coupon to a nearby store or restaurant, which can be earned after a certain number of general reports made through the app. To prevent duplication of data, the app could limit user reports of the same issue in the same location to once a month.

Credit: City of Auburn

FIGURE 9: CURRENT CIVIC AND SOCIAL RESOURCE LIST (FRONT)
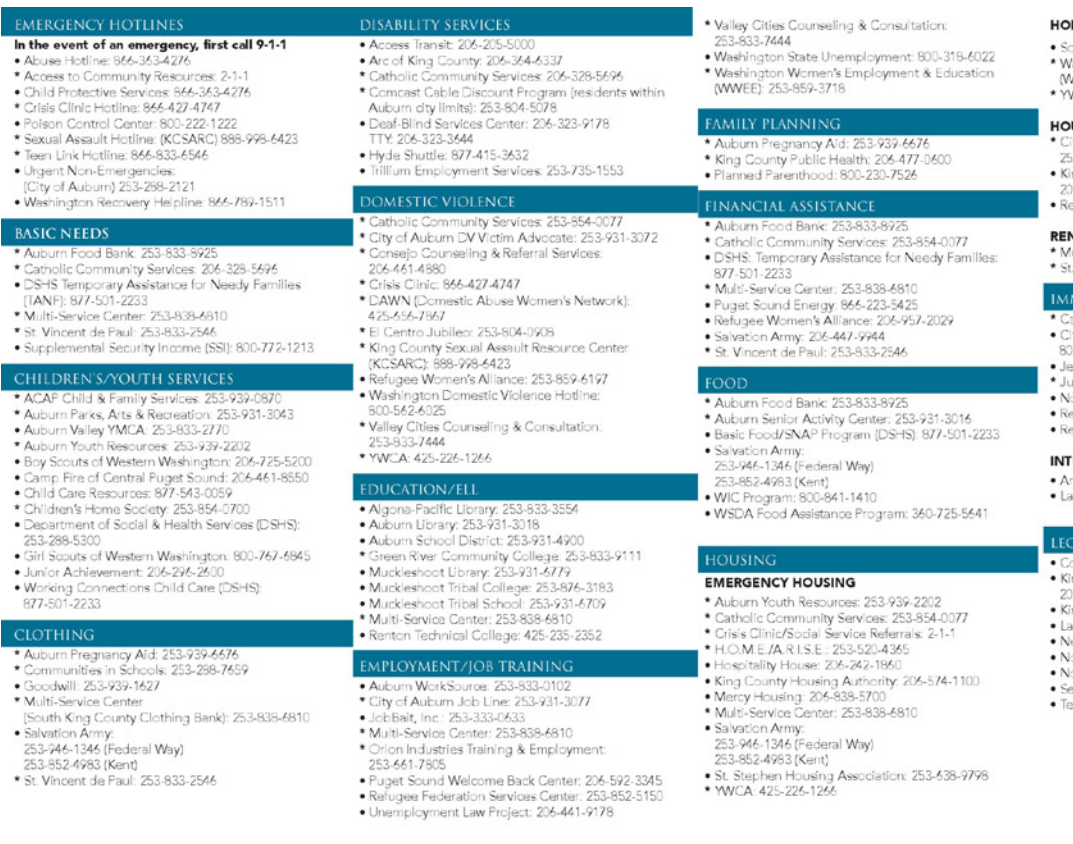
Credit: City of Auburn

FIGURE 10: CURRENT CIVIC AND SOCIAL RESOURCE LIST (BACK)

32   CITY OF AUBURN   LIVABLE CITY YEAR   33

One thing that must be considered is the potential moral implications of reports made in an app such as this. While the intent is good, the motive behind the app could be easy to misinterpret, and we recognize there could be resistance to asking Auburn residents to report on people they perceive as disadvantaged. In order to avoid controversy, Auburn would need to make very clear the overall goal of assisting the homeless, as well as underscore the fact that location reports would not be reported to police or result in sanctions of the unsheltered. Auburn ought to emphasize that, with continued use, the app's specific and year-round data can help the government provide better assistance to the homeless. Creating a culture of ethical, community driven collaboration that works to mitigate homelessness and urban issues is essential to the success of such a program. Auburn officials should also take steps to encourage the mitigation of social stigmas surrounding homelessness and assert that a lack of shelter is not something to be automatically blamed on individual people as it is often the result of larger societal factors. With enough discussion, residents would want to help those struggling to find shelter, and be assured that reports made in the app are ethical and constructive. If the implementation of this method is approached with sensitivity and an atmosphere of awareness, the potential benefits outweigh the drawbacks, and Auburn could gather new, up-to-date data with which to help the unsheltered. The new wealth of information collected via a mobile app would lay the foundation for the creation of policies that more effectively serve those in need.

Tracking the Unsheltered

While unorthodox, it is possible for Auburn to consider tracking the movements of the unsheltered in South King County that reside in or pass through the city. Similar to the mobile app, this could give Auburn rolling updates on individuals. This method differs from a mobile app in that it allows the homeless to be actively involved in the collection of information about their sub-communities. The goal of tracking the unsheltered would be to collect more detailed information about their preferred locations in order to know how to make the city a friendlier place for them to live and receive help.

Auburn may follow the model of Odense, Denmark in implementing this new system of gathering information about the homeless. Denmark made an effort to be friendly with the people participating in the study and made it clear that it would help them in the long run by aiming to provide them with better access to services. The police were also discouraged from interfering in the movements of the homeless participants, and were encouraged to avoid forcing the homeless away from public sites or the relocation of encampments during the study. The practices employed by Odense allowed the city to find information about where those without permanent shelter travel throughout each day and over longer periods of time. This enabled them to bring services to the places where those experiencing homelessness frequent most often.

Our proposed study for Auburn suggests following the ideology and many of the methods utilized in Odense. Regarding logistics, free bus passes would be distributed to consenting homeless individuals, each with a specific identification number. Any time a person with a pass would board a bus or access a public service, they would scan their card and their location would be logged into a city mapping system. Other locations frequented by the homeless, such as the public library, can also be included. Along with the card, each user would be handed a map of Auburn with the locations of services highlighted and a complete list of the different facilities they can visit for various forms of assistance. Phone numbers, email addresses, and a brief description of each site could also be included for convenience. As many holders of cards would likely feel uncomfortable with having their movements tracked, the name and all other information about each person would be kept separate from their specific identification number. As a result, all movements tracked into the system would be anonymous. If free public transportation access alone is not enough incentive to attract adequate participation, food vouchers could also be offered.

BY TRACKING MOVEMENT, AUBURN ALSO HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME AN INNOVATOR IN PRODUCTIVELY AND ETHICALLY INTERVENING TO MITIGATE HOMELESSNESS

Tracking those without permanent shelter may also offer a number of potential benefits to the city of Auburn. First and foremost, it provides a unique opportunity for Auburn to observe the movements of those without permanent shelter. The city could observe changes in movement between various census tracts over time and identify areas where the largest concentrations where people are residing and for how long. Auburn would also gain knowledge of which services are accessed most frequently and by what percentage of card holders. This informs the city of which forms of assistance are most utilized by the homeless population and empowers services to maximize the affectivity of their benefits. With this new scope of knowledge, the city will be better able to accurately account for the population and direct services. Auburn would also be better able to gather specific data about unhoused individuals by asking those who apply for the pass to fill out a comprehensive survey. By tracking movement, Auburn also has the opportunity to become an innovator in productively and ethically intervening to mitigate homelessness. Nothing as experimental as tracking the movements of those with inconsistent shelter has been attempted in the United States, it is possible for the city to create a model for the rest of the nation to adapt and utilize.

This method would also directly benefit those without permanent shelter by providing them with a list of accessible services and a map of their locations, and with it individuals can stay informed of various public services. Free transportation enables them to access these services and travel to job interviews, banks, shelters, and medical facilities. The more homeless people that access services,

the more likely Auburn is to develop a comprehensive assessment. Additionally, participating homeless individuals can gain a new sense of identity, self-confidence, and importance as they are given an active role in society. Since members of society without permanent shelter are often ostracized and de-humanized, such outreach on the part of the city can help build trust by demonstrating transparent willingness to engage and listen. This can build trust both between communities without permanent shelter and Auburn's services.

Potential shortcomings include reluctance to participate and the cost of implementing such a complex endeavor. Even with the consent of the participants and the movements of participating individuals kept anonymous, it is likely that many people would still be skeptical of the ethicality of tracking humans. Unhoused people may be wary of volunteering, especially considering that approximately 25% of the homeless population is afflicted with mental illness (Coalition on the Homeless 2015), which may create trust issues. Regardless, the homeless people who are amenable to the idea of being tracked could stand to benefit a great deal from their participation.

In order for the proposal to be effective, Auburn would need to create a system of scanners at each service location as well as enable the cards to serve as a public transportation pass. This could be complicated to organize and fund. Outside grants could combine with internal city funds to help finance a program should Auburn seek to explore this proposal's implementation. The maintenance of such an expansive presence of technology would also prove to be an ongoing expenditure for the city. However, the potential long-term benefits of employing an interactive and continually changing system should not be discounted.
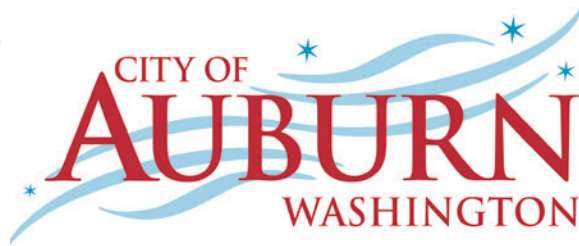
06 CONCLUSION

Methods for counting homeless populations are limited resulting in inaccurate data with likely undercounts and a lack of demographic, distribution, and causal information about homelessness. Cities both nationally and internationally are attempting a variety of new tactics in order to better understand homelessness. Auburn has the opportunity to join these cities and be on the forefront of innovation in counting and productively intervening with unhoused communities. The Livable City Year has provided the undergraduate Sociology 415 class with the opportunity to learn more about current issues that affect housing situations in Auburn and conceptualize new solutions that could the city's efforts to support all members of the community. We hope that the new counting suggestions, potential mitigation measures, and precedents of procedures will be useful in combatting the challenges presented by homelessness. The recommendations we have outlined in our paper can construct a solid foundation for creating advantageous housing policies and social services in the future.

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