

XII.B Human Services Element

Purpose

The Human Services Element supports the provision of services that assist in the physical, economic, social, and quality of life needs of community members (e.g., housing stability, food security, mental health services). The Element also supports measures to ensure that human services resources are available and accessible to all, especially currently and historically under-resourced community members. In addition, the Human Services Element includes goals and policies on the City's Youth Services and Older Adult (50+) services.

The Human Services Division and Human Services Commission use the Human Services Element as a guiding document. The Human Services Element helps guide funding decisions since the Element sets overarching goals and policies for the provision of human services within the City.

See the Housing Element for specific policies about affordable housing, low-income housing, and housing for people experiencing homelessness.



Vision

The City of Kirkland seeks to enhance the quality of life for all community members, regardless of race, nationality, ethnic background, religion, socioeconomic status, disability status, gender, sexual orientation, or age.

The City has made a commitment to providing services and programs to under resourced populations, including people living with disabilities; low- and moderate-income community

members; Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community members; youth; and older adults.



Peter Kirk Community Center

Existing Conditions

Human services are coordinated through a network of County and City entities, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, private companies, public health systems, and community advocates who work together to address complex social issues. Partnerships may span multiple sectors such as healthcare, education, faith communities, non-profits, and law enforcement.

The Human Services Division (within the Parks and Community Services Department) is primarily responsible for the planning and administration of the City's Human Services grants program. Historically, the City's role in human services was as a partner, funder, facilitator, and coordinator but not a direct provider of human services.

The City funds and partners with local human services provider organizations, as they are often the primary agencies responsible for community members who seek assistance. Providers have experienced challenges in responding to the increased demand for services, while navigating a patchwork of funding to support their work. As a result, the City has taken steps in working across sectors to provide services aimed to address gaps in service delivery. In 2023, the Human Services Division hired a Homeless Outreach Coordinator, who now provides direct services to community members experiencing homelessness.

The Human Services Commission (HSC) serves as a body to advise the Parks and Community Services Department and City Council on allocation of the City's General Funds, Community Development Block Grant (CBDG) funds, and any other funds earmarked for human services. The HSC also provides feedback on general issues related to human services.



A Human Services Division employee and local nonprofit staff at a community event

Topic Areas

Youth Services

The Youth Services Program is run by the City's Youth Services Staff with support from the Kirkland Youth Council (KYC). The Kirkland Youth Council is an advisory board to the City Council representing the youth in the community in grades between 6th-12th, and ranging in age from 12 to 18 years old. In addition, the Youth Council provides communication between the City Council, community-based groups, schools, and service organizations. The KYC also hosts annual service projects that give back to the community and a biennial summit, offers mini-grants supporting community projects, and produces videos annually to address difficult topics.

The City of Kirkland works in partnership with community agencies to provide information and fund services which support Kirkland youth and their families. Due to the changing landscape around what youth need, City and school-linked support programs have been established in response. For example, access to mentorship opportunities, mental and behavioral health services, and culturally specific and appropriate resources.

The Recreation Division provides recreation programs for preschoolers, youth, and teens, in addition to adults and older adults. Programs focus on supporting the social, mental, and physical health of community members through movement, art, sports, aquatics, science and other activities. Recreation programs are held at the North Kirkland Community Center, Peter Kirk Community Center, and the Kirkland Teen Union Building, as well as Kirkland parks.



Kirkland Teen Union Building

The Kirkland Teen Union Building (KTUB) is located on the perimeter of Peter Kirk Park next to the Peter Kirk Community Center. The mission of KTUB is to be a comprehensive teen center offering recreation programs and social services for teens. From 2001-2010 KTUB functioned as a teen center and became a temporary host for a nonprofit youth theater organization. In 2024, the City re-activated the building as a City-operated teen center with after-school drop-in activities, and recreation programs and services, including mental health and art therapy services.

50+ Services



Older Adult Programming at the Peter Kirk Community Center

The Peter Kirk Community Center provides opportunities for people aged 50 and over to have healthy and rewarding lives and to participate in community events. To achieve the goal of promoting wellness of body, mind and spirit, the Center offers a wide variety of fitness, art and lifelong learning classes, in addition to health, legal and financial services, lunches and home meal deliveries.

The Kirkland Senior Council is an advisory board to the City Council representing community members 50 years and older. The Senior Council prioritizes and works to implement the Senior Council Work Plan and makes recommendations to the City Council.

Continuum of Care for People Experiencing Homelessness

Through a comprehensive approach among City staff and in partnership with local non-profit organizations and regional partners, the City's goal is to prevent homelessness and, when it does occur, to transition individuals back into stable housing as soon as possible. The City makes investments in several critical areas as part of its approach to providing a continuum of care to people experiencing homelessness:

- Prevention - Resources and support services to keep individuals and families housed when experiencing instability such as direct rent or financial assistance, and eviction-prevention assistance through legal resources.
- Outreach and assistance - The Kirkland Homelessness Assistance and Response (HART) Team is a model partnership team of City staff across multiple departments that provide compassionate outreach and assistance to community members experiencing homelessness.
- Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Services - include programs that offer temporary 24/7 shelter and/or housing with case management to households who have lost housing.
- Permanent Housing - a community-based housing model not limited to a designated length of stay (unlike emergency shelters) combined with on-site services. Subsets include permanent affordable housing and permanent supportive housing. King County's Health Through Housing Initiative establishes partnerships with cities to create permanent supportive housing units for people experiencing chronic homelessness, with on-site staffing that offers case management, employment counseling, and medical/behavioral healthcare. In 2022, King County purchased the La Quinta Inn for permanent supportive housing in Kirkland.

Goals and Policies

Goal HS-1: Create a community that supports the well-being of all members and ensures they have the ability to meet their basic physical, economic and social needs, as well as opportunities to enhance their quality of life and achieve their full potential.

Policy HS-1.1: Regularly assess local human service needs and provide leadership in the development of services to address newly identified needs.

City staff should utilize Census data and other data to inform policies that address human service needs. In addition to monitoring demographic change in the community, City staff should keep in close contact with human service organizations and other jurisdictions in the region regarding the changing needs they are seeing and hearing from community members.

Policy HS-1.2: Promote community awareness of human service needs, the resources available to meet those needs, and how to best address the gaps in services.

All residents would benefit from an education campaign that explains both the range of needs of residents and the resources available to meet those needs.

Policy HS-1.3: Provide adequate funding for local nonprofit and community-based organizations serving the needs of Kirkland community members.

Human services are those efforts targeted directly to individuals and families to meet basic human needs and can be represented on a continuum of services including intervention, prevention, and enhancement. In order to address these needs, the City of Kirkland has five community goal areas that all community members should be able to achieve. They are the United Way community goal areas, which are used by several cities to summarize investments in key areas. These goal areas may change or expand as needs change:

- Food to eat and a roof overhead.
- Supportive relationships within families, neighborhoods and communities.
- Safe haven from all forms of violence and abuse.
- Health care to be as physically and mentally fit as possible.
- Education and job skills to lead an independent life.

The City Council should continue to allocate General Funds and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) public services funds to support community-based organizations and nonprofits that ensure a broad range of adequate support services are available to all residents, especially low- and moderate-income residents. See the City's Human Services Dashboard for more information.

Policy HS-1.4: Prioritize funding to nonprofits and community-based organizations serving the broad range of needs of extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate-income community members.

Policy HS-1.5: Support the community response to human service needs.

- *Collaborate across City departments, leveraging subject matter expertise and resources to coordinate human service delivery.*
- *Involve the City in direct delivery of human services when the City is one of the most efficient and effective providers, or there are no other qualified, available providers.*
- *Participate in capacity building efforts to support the expansion of providers who can enhance service delivery.*

Policy HS-1.6: Invest in policies, programs, and services to support people experiencing homelessness, and those at risk of becoming homeless in Kirkland or being displaced from Kirkland. This includes coordination with entities responsible for oversight of King County's homeless system and neighboring jurisdictions to ensure that subregional and local needs are met.

In June 2024, the City Council adopted Resolution R-5631, "Declaring the City's commitment to addressing homelessness through a person-centered approach and authorizing the City Manager to develop a homelessness continuum of care action plan for new policies, programs, and services that prevent and respond to unsheltered homelessness in Kirkland." R-3651 directs the City Manager to present the draft Homelessness Continuum of Care Action Plan to the City Council for consideration by the end of 2024.

Policy HS-1.7: In coordination with other departments, providers, and other key stakeholders, foster comprehensive, appropriate, and proactive responses for people experiencing crisis or instability. Invest in mental and behavioral health services.

Policy HS-1.8: Maintain and support the Human Services Commission.

The Human Services Commission is a valuable resource for the City and should be supported to help lead the City's efforts to support a socially sustainable community through health and human services and programs that fulfill the basic needs of all people and enhance the quality of life in Kirkland now and into the future.

Policy HS-1.9: Commit Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG) to affordable housing, permanent supportive housing, and house repairs for extremely low-, very low-, low- and moderate-income community members.

The City engages in partnerships between jurisdictions and other government agencies, nonprofit and for-profit organizations to enable those organizations to provide and maintain decent and affordable housing for all residents, particularly those at or below the 80 percent of median income. The City commits CDBG and General Funds to provide affordable housing in East King County through nonprofit agencies, such as A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH). The City should continue to support these agencies and their effort to provide affordable housing to Eastside residents, particularly low-income.

The City also uses its CDBG capital funds to support King County's program that responds to housing repair needs for low- to moderate-income individuals and families who cannot afford to repair their homes. The City should continue to support this program.

Policy HS-1.10: Participate and provide leadership in local, regional, state, and national human service efforts.

Meeting human service needs requires a regional solution. The City should continue to work with other jurisdictions and community partners to develop a regional planning effort to identify critical human service needs and to seek regional means of meeting those needs. This includes taking a leadership role on local forums and committees. The City should also stay up to date and engage with state and national efforts.

Policy HS-1.11: Pursue opportunities to build partnerships with neighboring cities, the County, community-based organizations, historically marginalized communities and communities experiencing systemic disadvantage, businesses, community courts, library systems, and other systems to strengthen the delivery of services while encouraging efficiencies.

Policy HS-1.12: Pursue the development of partnerships among the City, schools, human services providers and others, to address the needs of children and families within the school setting.

The City has supported and facilitated human service organizations providing needed human services within schools. The City should expand these initiatives with the help of additional community partners.

Policy HS-1.13: Involve system users with lived experiences and/or participants in services and programs who would be most impacted by human services decisions in the decision-making process.

Policy HS-1.14: Evaluate potential impacts to human services prior to making decisions and adopting regulations.

The City should consider both the possible effects of legislation on underrepresented communities as well as create increased opportunities for them. City staff should use an Equity Impact Assessment Tool when working on plans, services, and programs to assess the potential impacts of their decisions.

Policy HS-1.15: Administer programs for low-income households who qualify for reduced rates or need assistance.

The City offers residents the opportunity to donate funds through programs such as “Kirkland Cares” that assist Kirkland residents through the utility billing process. The City contracts with a local nonprofit organization to allocate these funds to help Kirkland households pay their heating, electric, and water/sewer utility bills. Local nonprofit organizations receive grant funding to administer rent, utility, and mortgage assistance to households in need. The City also has the Kirkland Care Low-Income Support Program, which is designed to support qualifying households with discounts on utility rates and other City services and charges.

Policy HS-1.16: Support programs that address the community behavioral and mental health needs and foster improved behavioral health outcomes and emotional well-being.

Goal HS-2: Pursue social justice, equity, and access in human services policies and programs.

Policy HS-2.1: Ensure human service programs are available and accessible regardless of a community member’s identity, background, or disability status.

It is a priority of the City to ensure that programs are accessible to all. To this end, the City should fund programs that support social and health needs for people with disabilities, low-income community members, people experiencing homelessness, and/or those who have limited access based on their language or cultural needs. Where possible, the City should provide language and culturally appropriate programs and scholarships, and accommodations for people with disabilities. The City also should collaborate with other jurisdictions and nonprofit entities to assist in meeting the needs of Kirkland residents.

Policy HS-2.2: Ensure human service programs are accessible to all in the community by removing any barriers, including but not limited to architectural, economic, cultural, language, communication, and location barriers. Support virtual programs as appropriate.

In order to ensure that Kirkland is a place where all people have the opportunity to thrive, the City should encourage and support human service providers to ensure that they are making their services available to those living with a range of abilities. For certain populations and situations, virtual programs may be more accessible for the target communities.

Policy HS-2.3: Support access to services, resources, and opportunities for people who have experienced past or current inequities.

Policy HS-2.4: Work to promote culturally responsive and equitable services for the community. Provide funding for multilingual communications to improve access to services.

Policy HS-2.5: Coordinate with human services organizations to locate facilities near commercial centers where transit facilities and active transportation infrastructure exist.

The City should locate its facilities in or near commercial centers where transit and active transportation facilities are available to ensure that the community can easily access services and programs. The City should also encourage other organizations to locate their programs and services near commercial centers. Having transit, walking, biking, and rolling routes near support services facilities ensures accessibility for all. Lastly, the City should encourage community shuttles and volunteer transportation programs and other transportation options.

Policy HS-2.6: Reduce barriers to access by supporting human services programs and events that bring services to the community.

The City funds several programs that are based in locations where people already visit such as schools and community centers.



Photos from the 2023 Kirkland Health and Wellness Fair

Policy HS-2.7: Pursue land use policies, development regulations, and funding to promote the integration of human service providers into locations with other community services and amenities to increase access to underserved communities and reduce stigma associated with human services provided to these communities.

Policy HS-2.8: Increase access to human service resources and support smaller and local provider organizations by simplifying the City's administrative process.

Goal HS-3: Build a community in which families, neighbors, schools, and organizations all work together to help young people become engaged, empowered, and responsible members of the community.

Policy HS-3.1: Maintain and support the Kirkland Youth Council. Center young peoples' voices in decision making processes related to youth services, programming, initiatives, and outreach.

The Youth Council provides an important link between the youth of Kirkland, the government, school district and the community. Their continued work to support youth initiatives should be

supported and encouraged. In addition, the City should prioritize the voices of young people in all decision-making processes related to youth services, programming, initiatives, and outreach.



Kirkland Youth Council volunteering

Policy HS-3.2: Provide a safe place for youth at the Kirkland Teen Union Building and provide recreational/educational activities, community services, and social programming.

The City should continue to support the Kirkland Teen Union Building to provide a safe and rewarding environment for youth to feel a sense of belonging in the Kirkland community.

Policy HS-3.3: Provide connections between Kirkland youth and the community by partnering with the City, school district, and local youth-serving organizations.

The City of Kirkland values its partnership with the Lake Washington School District and community organizations in helping to connect youth to their community. The Youth Council should continue its goal of connecting students to their community with youth summits, Citywide events and school activities. The City should continue to seek out grant opportunities to provide more school and community programs for youth.

Policy HS-3.4: Provide access to information and services for Kirkland youth and engage with youth to understand how they prefer to receive information and access services.

The City should work with the Lake Washington School District, Youth Council, and nonprofit organizations to provide information on social service programs, enrichment classes, teen employment, and issues around safe driving, swimming and biking. The City should engage with youth to collect feedback on how they want to receive information and access services, and this feedback should drive the work of the Youth Council and youth services at the City.

Policy HS-3.5: Support behavioral, mental, and physical health.

Leisure and recreation activities enrich lives, prevent social isolation and increase a sense of belonging to the community. Mental health is a challenge for many community members and the City should continue to fund behavioral and mental health services.

Policy HS-3.6: Support programs working to lower youth violence, substance abuse, depression and suicide in the community.

The City's youth services programs help to maintain positive relationships with community youth, referring youth to services and preventing high-risk behavior, including drug, alcohol, and tobacco use. Efforts are focused on working with youth after school, on weekends and during the summer when youth have more free time to support positive and healthy choices. The City should support programs that target and work to remedy the root causes of youth violence, substance abuse, and mental health challenges.

In addition, the youth services programs should continue supporting Kirkland's school and community teen depression and suicide programs given the increase in demand for this type of support due to social isolation that was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Goal HS-4: Recognize the unique needs of older adults. Maintain and improve the quality of life for community members 50 years and older.

Aging in place is more than just safety and accessibility at home. It is also critical that the community supports older adults to ensure they can remain active and integrated in society as they age.

Policy HS-4.1: Maintain and support the Senior Council. Center older adults' voices in decision making processes related to older adult services, programming, initiatives, and outreach.

The Kirkland Senior Council's mission is to preserve and improve the quality of life for Kirkland residents 50 years and older by identifying their concerns, advocating for their needs and creating programs and services that advance their well-being. The Senior Council offers people the opportunity to directly participate in the advocacy and creation of programs and services that meet their needs. The City should maintain the Senior Council and support its work. In addition, the City should prioritize the voices of older adults in all decision-making processes related to older adult services, programming, initiatives, and outreach.



Senior Council members at a property tax reduction forum

Policy HS-4.2: Provide opportunities for residents 50 years and older to be active, connected, and engaged in the community. The Peter Kirk Community Center and North Kirkland

Community Center should continue to provide a broad range of activities, classes and services for residents 50 years and older to engage and connect the residents with their community.

The City has developed partnerships with other community organizations and businesses to increase program opportunities and locations, and provide greater marketing abilities. These partnerships should continue and increase as the number of people 50 years and older increase.

Policy HS-4.3: Provide access to information, resources, services, and programs for older adults.

Older adults, their caregivers and family members often do not know where to turn for help for available programs, services, and resources. The Parks and Community Services Department should continue to provide access to resources at Peter Kirk Community Center along with funding programs that support access to information, services, and resources. The challenges are compounded for non-English speaking older adults and their families. The Parks and Community Services Department should continue partnerships with agencies to offer programs and services with bilingual staff, so that non-English speaking older adults have the opportunity to participate in social, recreational and educational activities.

In addition, many older adults do not drive or own vehicles, so they depend on public transportation or safe pedestrian and bicycle connections. The City should continue to work with the regional transit providers on convenient and low-cost public transportation throughout the City.

Policy HS-4.4: Maintain a safe environment for older adults in the community.

The City should continue an ongoing dialogue to assure older adults that the City is committed to keeping the community safe while also offering a variety of personal safety programs. The City should encourage partnership programs with various local agencies, such as the Gatekeeper program, to notify specified individuals when older adults fail to pick up their mail or newspapers, or when unattended problems are noticed at the home.

Policy HS-4.5: Encourage affordable and appropriately designed housing for older adults and people with disabilities.

Affordable and appropriately designed accessible housing are key issues for older adults to be able to remain in Kirkland as they age. Universal design focuses on making housing safe and accessible for everyone, regardless of age, physical ability, or stature. Examples include ramps, grab bars, and wider doors. In exploring options for affordable housing for older adults, the City should utilize the expertise available through ARCH, the King County Housing Authority, local faith-based organizations with housing programs, nonprofit and for-profit housing developers, and other resources interested in affordable housing for older adults. In addition, the City should identify the necessary changes in land use regulations and building codes that will make universally-designed housing easier to implement. Additional goals, policies and background information that support affordable housing and housing for older adults are found in the Housing Element.