

What is Initiative 135 for Social Housing and What Does it Mean for Housing in the City of Seattle?

An exploration of perceptions of I-135 and what people in the City of Seattle think that the impact will be

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Policy Studies

University of Washington Bothell

Summer 2023

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Abstract

This is a report which examines Initiative 135 for social housing and seeks to better understand what its impact will have on the City of Seattle through perceptions of others. Issues discussed within this report include homelessness and the housing crisis in Seattle. The research questions that this report seeks to solve include: What is Initiative 135 for Social Housing and what does its recent passing mean for the City of Seattle? To research and better understand these questions, this study examines first-hand sources in the form of interviews with people related to homelessness and the housing crisis. Secondary sources include previous legislation, academic writings, and articles. These data sources work in tandem with the interviewee responses to better understand what I-135 could do for the city based on the perceptions and data collected. Data collected indicated several common themes including (1) excitement of the structure of I-135 and what it might do for Seattle, (2) logistics and utilization of resources and the upcoming growth the plan should utilize, and (3) the importance of community input when creating and operating an initiative like I-135. These themes found within the interviewee process, working with all secondary data sources, allowed for the research to provide an informed reflection and policy recommendation at the conclusion of this research. The recommendation from this study advises that the City of Seattle prioritize the construction of social housing in the near future, through utilization of I-135, and that there be more focus on resource allocation to those seeking housing via programs working with each other to get as many housed in the City of Seattle as possible.

Chapter 1: Introduction/Purpose of Study

Homelessness is an issue that we have all seen in our daily lives or in the media that is seemingly getting worse and worse. This issue is truly urgent because it is accelerating at an alarming rate, having “grown by 10% from 2020 to 2022, increasing by 2,288 people”. (Patrick, Seattle Times, 2023, pg.1) My study focuses on studying homelessness in the City of Seattle and examining efforts to curb the rise in homelessness. We know that homelessness is a problem and is an epidemic around the world that drastically needs to improve for the sake of humanity. Housing is a human right. The lack of housing is a problem that needs to improve, and as such, legislation needs to be put in place to help to do so. This study will contribute an analysis on the perspective of a recently passed plan for the City of Seattle on how to help the homelessness crisis. The purpose of this research is to answer the question: What is Initiative 135 for Social Housing and what does its recent passing mean for the City of Seattle?

Within the project, I am focusing on the recently passed  Initiative 135 Social Housing measure of the City of Seattle. This was a people’s initiative to create a social housing authority and to inspire growth in building housing for the people of Seattle. This is a plan in which the creation of housing for mixed to low income is a major priority through the utilization of multifaceted approaches to build more affordable housing. The goal of I-135 is to “create a public development authority (PDA) to develop, own, and maintain publicly financed mixed-income social housing developments. (Initiative 135, 2023). Included in these approaches is the specific promise to work with the city to identify areas and create affordable housing for the City of Seattle. More of this plan will be described in length in the literature review portion of my research. The final vote within the February 2023 special election to decide on Initiative I-135. I-135 passed by a margin of 57.09% (90,901 votes)  (Ballotpedia, 2023) Within this research, I am

examining this specific plan and comparing it with another plan to improve homelessness. I draw on prior insights from outside research by studying the One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan in relation to I-135. The One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan seeks to improve homelessness by providing services and collaborating with other housing related programs to best provide said resources. By focusing on these components, this study seeks to understand what the implications mean for the City of Seattle and working to better understand the perspectives behind I-135 in the lens of homelessness as a whole.

In addition to exploring this plan in relation to I-135, I am focusing on other resources and academic writings that discuss what caused homelessness in Seattle and alternative methods for improving the homelessness situation. These resources will be explored within the literature review and will relate to common themes. The intention that I am utilizing for this research focuses on interviewing people specifically chosen for their involvement or interest in improving homelessness in Seattle. These elements relate to the recent passing of I-135 and what implications the plan holds for Seattle's housing market.

The objectives of my study focus on examining I-135 and previous legislation to explore the perspectives on the plan and what it means for the city. In doing so, my research has a well-rounded balance of available information and collected data to be utilized. I seek to take the past and present perspectives and apply it to legislation of the future. It is my philosophy that with each example of legislation that is passed, the issue will continue to get better because of the utilization of the elements that work. The study objective does not end there as it's my hope that by addressing what the perspectives of the plan are, I can hold a deeper understanding of what the initiative will do for the City of Seattle. The City of Seattle was focused on in particular because of its recent efforts to improve housing and homelessness in the form of the One Seattle

Homelessness Action Plan, and more recently, Initiative 135 for Social Housing. Initiative 135 holds a methodology that is uncommon, and as such, is something that I sought out to research in terms of how it is viewed and what perceived potential an initiative like that might have for the development of future homelessness policy.

The significance of this research is that it can be used to advise on future legislation and will be something that I can advocate for going forward into the future. Specifically, policymakers will be able to reference my research in the context of adhering to community feedback and creating more affordable housing. Another aspiration of my project is that policymakers may take inspiration from my focus on the examination of homelessness in Seattle and explorations as to what keeps people homeless based on perceptions of interviewees and studying prior academic studies to discuss their content in relation to my research.

This research project follows a design of studying secondary sources and then adding my own contribution on the form of primary data from my interviews. Key literature used as secondary data and sources are presented within my upcoming literature review section. The subsequent chapter will describe my data and methodology and the interview process. Following this chapter, are my findings and outcomes of the research process based on what has been studied. Concluding this research is my interpretation of all that was studied and a policy recommendation to inform future housing and homelessness policy based on all that was studied and collected within this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

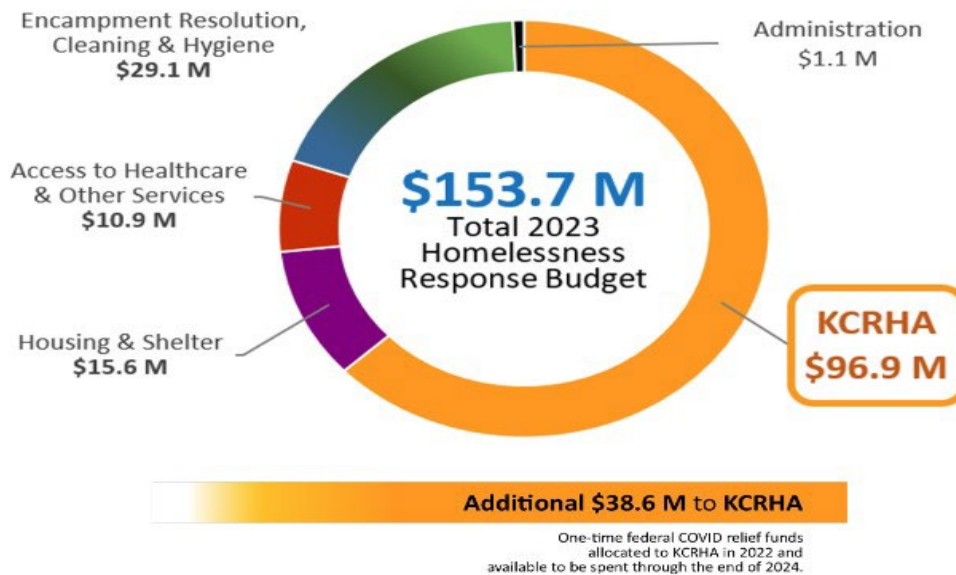
My research on I-135 has been motivated to better understand the homelessness crisis in Seattle and to examine what is being done currently to decrease homelessness. The research that I have conducted for this study has varied in terms of sources but has provided me with many key overall themes that have arisen through my studies. The themes focus primarily on methods utilized by City and non-City actors in (1) creating solutions to assist homelessness, (2) perceptions of homeless people within the area of Seattle, (3) potential causes of homelessness, (4) reported data on the numbers of homeless persons housed, and (5) my own reflection on the topic and what I find the resources to mean in the context of I-135.

Section 1.1: Solutions to Assist in Reducing Homelessness

The focal point of my research, I-135, seeks to utilize a multifaceted approach to build more affordable housing in Seattle. The plan promises to (1) establish a Public Developer, (2) require City start-up support, and (3) to create a process for public lands. (House Our Neighbors, Initiative Overview 2023). This is something that was promised in addition to the commitment to develop a board of 13 public figures who have agreed to follow these goals and to create bylaws within 90 days of coming into office. The initiative holds many main goals and the specific phrasing that sums up the main goal being that the “the housing developed under this ordinance shall be permanently protected for public use, dedicated to workforce and community housing, and will thereby increase the supply of permanent, truly affordable housing for Seattle residents.” (I-135 Initiative Text, 2023). The plan holds the promise that, if passed, it would obtain start-up support from the City must come in the first 18 months and would include assistance in obtaining office space, staffing, supplies, insurance, bonding, legal services, and access to general funds, grant funds, and Councilmanic Revenue Bonds. (I-135, Section 12, 2023). Another element of

this initiative that is vital to the effort to reduce homelessness is the agreement that “whenever the City considers the sale or gift of public lands for a private or non-public use, it shall prepare a feasibility study to consider whether such public lands should be transferred to the Public Developer for social housing.” (I-135, Section 13, 2023) This is extended to land that is unused, under-used, or surplus to be made available to I-135. Where this plan makes a turn in terms of initiative statement and writings is in Section 14 where the focus is not directly stated to be toward reducing homelessness, but on creating affordable housing for all. The main tangible product of this plan is the new development of affordable mixed-income housing. This distinction is vastly different than my plan of comparison with the One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan.

The One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan (OSHAP) was passed during the Covid-19 pandemic in which it sought to help reduce the number of homeless people in Seattle due to the severity of the issue during and after the pandemic. The key objectives of this plan were to (1) bring people indoors, (2) create places to live, and (3) to help in new ways. (OSHAP, Key Objectives) These are similar goals to I-135 but hold a broader sense in how it seeks to help those experiencing homelessness. This plan is unique in that it acknowledges that housing is scarce in Seattle by stating that the “supply of shelter spaces has not kept pace with the City’s growing demand” (OSHAP, A Growing Crisis Calls for a New Approach, 2023). The approach that the city has focused on is primarily the utilization of a budget of \$153.7 million allocated as the following:



(Figure #1 - Source: One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan / King County Regional Homelessness Authority)

The budget is utilized with the allocated amounts shown in Figure #1, but also focuses on a specific action plan. The action plan includes (1) supporting regional solutions, (2) bringing people indoors, (3) building more affordable housing faster, (4) identifying needed shelter and housing, (5) expanding our public safety toolkit, and (6) giving Seattle new ways to help. Here we see an overlap in the prioritization of helping the homeless in a variety of ways. In terms of the One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan, the vehicle in which they work to help homelessness is by utilizing the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA). The KCRHA are the ones who look for housing, relocate homeless persons, and evaluate the success of the plan among many other actions. In terms of evaluation, there is a monthly snapshot for January 2023 to March 2023 in which we see that the number of homeless persons varies with time. The reported statistics cited 174 offers of shelter before encampment closure in January, 221 in February, and 189 in March. (OSHAP, Bringing People Indoors, 2023) In terms of tangible building of housing, within 12 months the plan commits to approving all affordable housing

project permits. (OSHAP, Building Affordable Housing Faster, 2023). Both OSHAP and I-135 focus on providing housing through various methods to reduce the amount of homeless in Seattle.

The One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan has its limitations in that it was passed during the COVID-19 pandemic and had its creation rushed due to the severity and seriousness of combatting homelessness at this time. With that being said, there's applicability in the modern day in that homelessness is a timeless issue and has persisted for quite a while.

Section 1.2: Perspectives and Perceptions of Homelessness in Seattle.

With action and tangible building in mind in terms of reducing homelessness, it is just as important to focus on the perceptions and perspectives that aid in the creation of these policies. The perspective of the public is important in making any policy because the public voice needs to be on board when change occurs. This is a common theme in the review of the literature on homelessness in Seattle, including, Carmen Smith's *Perceptions of Homelessness in Seattle's Green Lake/Lower Woodland Park* and Mohamed Olad Hassan Jafar Fidow's *Rising Number of Somali Immigrants Face Homelessness in Seattle*.

The first source, *Perceptions of Homelessness in Seattle's Green Lake/Lower Woodland Park*, is an examination of the responses of an interviewed public based around homelessness. This study focuses on a spectrum of responses about how they feel homelessness has affected the neighborhood and how it impacts their experience in the area. (Smith, 2022, pg.1) This resource takes a unique lens in that it utilizes interviewing as a tool to better understand what the public thinks of the issue and allows for the findings to conclude with an informed common theme of the perceptions. Within this article, the topic of how homelessness has been approached by the

city is also assessed. The discussion focuses on the introduction of the Tiny Village Program in 2017, which was a city sanctioned effort in which public resources could be allocated. This resource specifically focuses on homelessness that lacks this support structure, particularly those living in tents or on sidewalks.

The most significant finding from the resources reviewed in this study was of the idea of coexistence between the housed and unhoused. This is the only published resource focused on and acknowledges this idea, and it is with this that the interviews for this research were conducted. This was made possible through the researcher working with the Green Lake Community Council (GLCC) and the Phinney Ridge Community Council (PRCC) from which they obtained 15 interviews, which snowballed into 33 interviews. (Smith, 2022, pg.39) Within the interviews the questions that Smith asked in the research included:

1. Does the presence of tents, encampments, and/or unhoused individuals impact your use of the park? How so?

2. How does the presence of tents, encampments, and/or unhoused individuals in the park make you feel?

(Smith, 2022, pg.40)

Through the interviewee responses, Smith developed composite profiles of what was discussed of the experience of those that live and visit the area including:

1. Those who have been largely unaffected by homelessness in the park
2. Those who have modified their use of the park as a result of the homelessness in the park.
3. Those who no longer frequent the park due to the presence of homelessness.

(Smith, 2022, pg.46)

It is from these profiles that Smith draws their conclusions. These conclusions arise in the form of emerging themes pulled from commonly said comments during the interviews. Included in these themes were (1) government frustrations, (2) safety concerns, (3) homelessness in Green Lake / Lower Woodland Park being a part of a larger problem, (4) feelings toward coexistence, and (5) feelings of inner turmoil. (Smith, 2022, pg.63). The author concluded from these perceptions that the public agrees that temporary housing is good in the short term, but that more permanent housing needs to be created to be a truly successful solution. The importance of permanent housing is more heavily emphasized in Mohamed Olad Hassan Jafar Fidow's 2022 writing *Rising Number of Somali Immigrants Face Homelessness in Seattle*.

Fidow's account is about the ways in which Somali immigrants experience housing insecurity when they move to the Seattle area. While it does not contain research in the conventional sense, the value comes from those interviewed and the topics discussed in the writing. Specifically, there is a focus on describing this unfortunate phenomenon by stating that "increasing numbers of Somali immigrants living in the western U.S. city of Seattle are facing homelessness due to soaring rental prices that exacerbate other economic and refugee hardships" (Fidow, 2022, pg.1) The discussion of how expensive housing has become for everyone is discussed in length within this reading, focusing on the outcome of these ever-increasing prices. The topic of the Somali community youth moving to the United States, Seattle, is explained and the outcome of them seeking affordable housing is examined. According to the writing, some Somali immigrants must live with relatives or move to areas like Tukwila or SeaTac as a result of not finding affordable housing in Seattle. Additionally, the essay further emphasizes the position of some Somali immigrants in the discussion of Diversity Immigrant Visas, in which a visa-

holder is ineligible to receive public assistance. This creates a much more significant problem in that there is a blatant lack of housing and resources made available to those immigrating to the United States. This resource provides us with the very real information that “hundreds of thousands of Somalis have relocated to the United States over the past three decades, seeking to escape chronic conflict and poverty in their homeland. Estimates of the number of Somali immigrants in Seattle vary widely, from just several thousand to more than 30,000.” (Fidow, 2022, pg.1). The essay contextualizes this and shines light on the stark reality that for many in Seattle housing has become too expensive and scarce. However, the writing concludes with the statement that Sahra Bashir Farah’s “non-profit has received millions of dollars in grants from the government for homeless prevention and other community services. She says she wants to pull those who were forced out of the city back to Seattle.” (Fidow, 2022, pg.1) This which shows that there is a perception and understanding within the discussed Somali community about the lack of housing in Seattle and that something needs to change to bring about more affordable housing.

It is for the perceptions of community members and those interviewed that I chose to utilize these sources in my research. They contextualize and add a more human element to the issue that is the lack of housing in the city which allows me to better explain I-135 and what it seeks to solve in context to the lack of housing. The perspective of the people is something that I utilize as qualitative data and as such have chosen to include within this work. With this lack of housing discussed, another common theme within my secondary data comes from the discussion on what causes people to become homeless.

Section 1.3: Potential Causes of Homelessness as Researched by Secondary Sources

Another theme that arose within my secondary sources comes from the explanation of what causes homelessness in Seattle. A key resource that was utilized in my studies of this issue comes from Andrew Buncombe's *Seattle's Homelessness Crisis is Getting Worse – No Amount of Tech Philanthropy can undo Microsoft's Damage*, which best explains the rise in housing costs in Seattle due to tech. It cites this as far back as when Microsoft first arrived in Seattle, stating that "when it [Microsoft] made this region its headquarters in 1979, it had just 30 employees. Today that number is close to 40,000 – all of them helping to push up the cost of buying or renting homes." (Buncombe, 2019, pg.1) The article contextualizes the homelessness issue in Seattle by bringing up the point that Seattle is home to some of the richest people in the world, including Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos, but still has many people living in severe poverty and living on the streets. Tech philanthropy is also discussed in context to Microsoft's efforts to improve the city through its announcement of \$500M to help address the shortage of affordable housing. (Buncombe, 2019, pg.1) Additionally, the article does acknowledge that Bezos and Gates have donated money to homelessness, while Amazon and Starbucks have opposed plans to fund low-income housing. While this article discusses the issue from this lens, it also acknowledges that homelessness has many different causes. It concludes that "big technology is not the only factor in the soaring cost of housing in many cities and growing homelessness. A decades-long failure to invest more in affordable homes, along with people's objection to high-density housing being built in their neighborhood, are just as important." (Buncombe, 2019, pg.1)


These causes are important to discuss in context to what other additional resources have attributed to the driving forces behind the persistence of homelessness in Seattle. The One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan cites the root causes that someone becomes homeless can be

attributed to affordability, equity, and health. (OSHAP, Understanding This Multi-Faceted Problem, 2023). In this same vein, the discussion from the Somali community is just as vital to focus on. Specifically, as noted by Sahra Bashir Farah on why Somali immigrants cannot obtain affordable housing, "the whole city became very expensive when it came to housing," she says. "For example, the rental cost of a house for a family, which used to be \$1,000 [per month] is now \$3,000. Our Somali people are low-income people. They cannot afford this exorbitantly expensive rent." (Fidow, 2022, pg.1)

The causes discussed are important to acknowledge because they show just how important having reliable, affordable housing truly is. To have a roof over your head is something that every human deserves and needs to survive. This very idea is explored within Rachel Ariel Scott's *Without Shelter, People Die: Disproportionate Mortality Rates Among King County's Homeless Population, 2009-2019*. This article focuses on the causes of death among the homeless in Seattle and informs policy through its research to provide better insight and protection for this vulnerable population. Within this research, the approach follows one that recognizes that housing status is a key predictor of health outcomes and life expectancy. (Scott, 2020, pg.1) With this focus in mind, the authors examined the causes of death of 1,271 persons in King County who were presumed to be homeless. All data collected and examined for this study comes from the King County Medical Examiner Office (MEO). Within this methodology, the data was scrubbed and coded to be identified as drug-and-alcohol induced, homicide, injury, natural, other/unknown, and suicide. (Scott, 2020, pg.7). The most significant finding of the study was that approximately half of all deaths were attributed to suicide, overdose/acute intoxication, or complications related to chronic substance or alcohol use. (Scott, 2020, pg.14) Factors contributing to these deaths include housing conditions, sense of hopelessness, and

isolation experienced among the homeless. This article concludes with the importance of utilizing homeless mortality data to address the issue caused by the lack of shelter among many other factors. (Scott, 2020, pg.16)

Section 1.4: Reported Data on the Numbers of Homeless Persons Housed

The emphasis on data on the efforts to reduce homelessness and to build affordable housing is just as important as looking at solutions in reducing homelessness, perceptions on the homelessness issue, and the causes of homelessness. The secondary data this study examines is the number of homeless persons in Seattle. Specifically, I first focus on the One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan and the reported number from the King County Regional Homelessness Authority. The King County Regional Homelessness Authority, under directive of the City of Seattle, have identified 2,065 units of shelter and supportive housing. (OSHAP, Our Key Objectives). Within this, they have reported that they have 922 units open for use, 605 units are currently under construction, and 538 units that they are preparing to build. This data demonstrates that change is occurring, slowly but surely. Within the One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan the City and the KCRHA have posted their quarterly snapshots of their progress and have made this information available to the public. This data highlights progress and shows that, at least to some degree, elements of the plan are working based on the guidelines and reporting strategy laid out by the KCRHA.  reported data includes the following table to which I have formatted based off the reported information from the program:

Reported Data from KCRHA (in relation to OSHAP)	Q1 Reported Data (April 26, 2023)	Q2 Reported Data (August 10, 2022)	Q3 Reported Data (October 21, 2022)	Q4 Reported Data (January 27, 2023)
# of Verified Tents	414 (Compared to 712 in Dec. 2022)	814 in June 2022 (Increased from 763 in May 2022)	724	712 in Dec. 2022 (814 in June)
# of Visible Encampment RVs	320 (Compared to 449 in Dec. 2022)	426 with any number of vehicles, roughly half of those sites having fewer than five vehicles. (225 in May 2022, only included sites with 5 or more vehicles)	273	449
# of Referrals to Shelter Accepted	600+	1,845 units to be open in 2022/2023 1,300 units of shelter and supportive housing units identified, either under planned, under construction, or open for use sometime in	1,912	2,065

		2022. 545 additional units.		
# of Total Emergency Medical Response Calls	3,143 (Slight increase to an average of 35 calls per day when compared to Q4 2022)	5,715 (Increase from 3,707 in the first four months of 2022)	9,063	12,138
# of fires at Tent/RV Encampments	412 (Average of 4.5 fires per day)	855 through June 30 th (an increase from 608 fires in the first four months of 2022)	1,225	1,617
# of Shots Fired or Shooting Incidents Connected to Homelessness	13 (Decrease from the average of two per week in Q4 2022 to one per week in Q1 2023)	71 shots fired or shooting incidents that were connected to homelessness through June 30 th (compared to 53 incidents through April 30 th)	101	No Data Available

(Figure #2 - Source: Office of Mayor Bruce Harrell in the City of Seattle, posted by Jamie Housen)

These data points demonstrate that progress has been made in some elements and that some elements remain fluctuating quite frequently. Within the data set, Q1 is the most recent and demonstrates that there was a significant drop in the numbers from January 2023 to April 2023. The table demonstrates all the changes recorded by the KCRHA and shows progress in getting people off the streets and that offers of housing have potential to make a difference. The need for housing as fast as possible is further emphasized when one looks at the changes in the mortality rate. From 2009 to 2019, King County saw an increase from 864 to roughly 1,500 per 100,000 people experiencing homelessness. (Scott, pg.6, 2020). It is with this look at the reported data that I look at my own contribution to this research in my focus on I-135. I reflect upon my secondary sources and relate them to my primary plan of study and what I researched in context to the initiative.

Section 1.5: Literature Reflection on Secondary Sources in the Context of I-135

These resources that I have explored have provided a basis in which I look at homelessness in Seattle and at the focus on Initiative 135 for Social Housing. What I take away from these resources is that there are many people affected by homelessness and people dying on the streets every day. We've seen that there are varied methods to help those that are homeless through fast construction of buildings or better understanding the issue from a public perspective. What these resources and secondary sources that I've previously discussed show is that communities in Seattle want homeless people to have shelter and to have said shelter be more than just a temporary fix. The City of Seattle could relocate people and that would still not solve the issue of homelessness. From these resources, I conclude three main points: (1) the only way to help with homelessness is to make affordable, permanent housing, (2) focusing on this point and putting efforts forth to understand the communities affected by homelessness is important in determining

where to build said housing, and (3) change in the housing crisis in Seattle needs to happen immediately to prevent further deaths. Initiative 135 adheres to and follows these points as well. This is why I have chosen to research this plan and to interview with the creators of this plan to better understand what it could mean toward making a better Seattle in which the housing is affordable, and less people are homeless.

Chapter 3: Data & Methodology

Section 2.1: Research Design

This research uses a case study design with reliance on multiple sources of data including prior legislation, and academic writings. This research follows a case study design because I found it to be the most well-rounded approach because, for the sake of research on I-135 and my interviewing and study of secondary sources, this design allowed me with the most flexibility in how I display the research and collected data. Additionally, this design has allowed me to use my interviewing approach as a legitimate tool to inform my conclusion and research. My main contribution in this research is created from my primary data collected in the form of interviewing. The common theme of which, for all these resources, is the relation to homelessness and housing and how policy seeks to improve these issues.

The stance and iteration that this research takes, in terms of longitudinal design, is that my research focuses on a present initiative and previously passed legislation and looks at these plans in terms of what was promised and what the perception of the plans is in the public eye were. With a study of this type, there are many pitfalls that present themselves. This will be examined within this study as I seek to better understand what needs to happen to improve homelessness in the City of Seattle. Through this lens of design, I seek to better explain I-135 and what the perceptions of this initiative mean for the city and the future of housing within the City of Seattle. This design is informed by my data sources to which I will explore my firsthand and secondary data later within this report.

The methods used in this research rely on qualitative data in the form of interviews. The idea to utilize this methodology was inspired from Creswell's chapter on *Data Collection*.

(Creswell, 2007, pg.75-94) This is what brought me to choose to interview because of how useful understanding data collected from people is. Due to the importance of this collected data, I have chosen to utilize interviewing as my main data collection methodology. To add further legitimacy to my interview data as my research method, I will acknowledge that I-135 was designed and built around community feedback. It is because of this feedback and perspectives of the community, that I've chosen to focus on the perspectives of two interviewees who are familiar with I-135 and hold an understanding as to what impact it might have to the City of Seattle. Seattle was chosen for this research because of its unique homelessness crisis when compared to the rest of the country. This crisis is what drew me to study this city.

These chosen methods are appropriate for this study because they provide valuable insight into what it takes to create and implement a policy based around affordable housing and homelessness in Seattle. Underlying assumptions of this methodology might be that this information presented is not enough to understand the initiative. This assumption is correct in a way, as I am seeking to understand it from the point of view of a community rather than from a political, economic, or socio-economic standpoint. Though I would argue that this interview data and methodology is exactly what is needed to best understand the initiative on such a grounded level. The techniques that I utilized allowed me to gain appreciation and to see how this plan fits into the City of Seattle goals and what promises and implications that it hopes to achieve based on the perspective of the public. A possible limitation of this study is that primary data comes from just two interviews.

The limitation from my chosen methodology and primary data's reliance on the interview of two people is by no means representative of the entire community. However, this information is valuable in understanding the initiative which meets the objective of this study. This is because

a central component of the creation of the initiative itself was community feedback, and therefore appropriate for this study's analysis. To reduce the effect of this bias, more interviews would be conducted in future studies with a greater variety of stakeholders. This will provide a more holistic perspective through community-informed input to better inform policy recommendations on affordable housing and homelessness in Seattle.

Section 2.2: Data Source

The key source of data utilized within this research primarily comes in the form of qualitative data from my interviews with people in the Seattle area who are investing in improving homelessness and the housing crisis in the City of Seattle. This is my firsthand data utilized to understand the implications of I-135 because it provides the community feedback element in the goals hoped to be achieved by the initiative, as perceived by the public. This initiative is rooted in talking with the community on the issue of affordable housing, and as such, is vital in understanding what went into its creation.

Other secondary data sources used were reported data from the King County Regional Homelessness Authority in tandem with the One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan, reported statistics from the City of Seattle. I've researched similar materials in the production of housing to improve the homelessness issue. This data takes a backseat to my interviews regarding I-135 but still provides additional context to the housing and homelessness issue in Seattle. I've included discussion of secondary sources within this work because they help to explain and further understanding of I-135 through outside perspectives and ideas. The data presented in I-135, it contains the promises of those that pushed for the initiative to be passed. These promises are described within the literature review portion of this research. This plan is 6 months old at the time of this writing, and as such, reported data from the plan is scarce to non-existent.

My research question is directly addressed through the study of these data sources via interactions with the themes of my secondary data. The interviews conducted are the main contribution to improving the issue of homelessness and the housing crisis. The importance as to why I chose to interview comes from how valuable input has been in the present and the past on legislation that was passed for homelessness. Discussion with people about what they think of I-135 has proven vital to understanding exactly what it is that the plan might do to the City of Seattle. This data helps me better understand just how drastic the issue of homelessness is in relation to my research on I-135.

The tool that I utilize when approaching data has been to focus on utilization of the constructivist paradigm. By this, I mean that I am viewing this through the lenses that homelessness is a multifaceted issue that needs as many perspectives as possible to make an impact. As such, I am focusing on the perspectives of the interviewed and to compare that information with secondary perspectives and with the data available regarding homelessness. This data and methodology provided me with a significantly more informed answer to the questions about what kind of impact people think that this plan will have on the homelessness and housing issue within the city.

Section 2.3: Interviews

Within this research, my primary contribution to the discussion on homelessness and housing came in the form of interviewing two people about the initiative and what they thought it might do for the city of Seattle.

My interviews had two people included to which will be known as Interviewee #1 and Interviewee #2 from this point forward. Interviewee #1 was involved in the creation of I-135 and understands every aspect of the goals that I-135 strives for. Interviewee #1 is a person that worked within the development and implementation of I-135 within the City of Seattle. To which they designed I-135 based off other models seen around the world and on a smaller scale plan found in Maryland. The data within the Maryland plan informed their studies and direction of this plan, better informing how the policy should be written and what would be needed for this plan to be successfully passed. This interviewee was a person very close to I-135 and understood the plan in its entirety, proving invaluable to understanding the inner workings of the plan and what it sought out to do for housing in the city.

Interviewee #2 is a person that works within permanent supportive housing in the City of Seattle. As such, they work more closely on the county level when it comes to affordable housing, finding housing, and familiarity with funding models of housing initiatives and legislation. Their perspective is one of support for supportive housing and on resource allocation for those seeking to come out of homelessness or seeking housing. Within their work, they understand the struggles and logistics of creating housing in the City of Seattle. This interviewee also understands the logistics that go into developing policy on a county wide level.

Both interviewees have been chosen because of their positions in the housing and homelessness discussion and the valuable perspectives and ideas that they present in their discussion of Initiative 135. The methods in which I interviewed them comes from the interview questions that I have included below. Said questions were asked with emphasis on listening and capturing the unique perspective of the interviewed in their responses. Included in my findings are the interviewee responses and what they mean for answering my research questions.

The questions utilized within this study were based on the position of wanting to learn more about what people believed I-135 would do for Seattle. These questions were created through the lens of understanding I-135, and as such, the questions are focused on that initiative but allow for free reign in terms of any suggestions and policy recommendations from interviewees. I developed these questions to better gauge what people thought of this initiative, this way I could obtain a better idea as to how they felt about the initiative and its impact on the city.

The purpose of the questions used in these interviews were focused on creating a deeper understanding of what people think of this plan, and any other, homelessness or housing initiatives within the city of Seattle. The questions asked of each interviewee included the following:

- Question #1: Do you think the recent passing of I-135 will help decrease the number of homeless persons in the City of Seattle?
- Question #2: What elements of this plan do you think will be most successful and why?
- Question #3: If you could change anything about the currently implemented plan, what would it be?

- Question #4: What do you think needs to be done politically in order to decrease the number of homeless persons in Seattle? Is this something that you would want to see in future homelessness policy?

To prepare to have discussions with people for interviewees, I researched initiative I-135 and emailed out all the people that I had figured would be happy to talk about the initiative. In terms of selecting people to talk to, I started by emailing out officials working for the City of Seattle. From there, I was directed toward the King County Regional Homeless Authority and the Real Change organization. Once I had talked to several people, I was directed to talk to someone who worked directly on the passing and creation of I-135 and someone who worked within permanent supportive housing for King County. The questions for those interviewed are all uniform and do not deviate from what is listed above.

The methods in which I analyzed my collected data come in the form of transcribing what had been discussed in the interviews and pulling common themes from the discussion. This interview method came in the form of talking with interviewees and letting them respond with as much or as little as they wanted to share. The importance of the discussion informs me of what the policy means and holds potential to do for the City of Seattle. On a larger scale, the way in which I analyze the data will also act as an influence in my recommendation regarding future efforts to create a homelessness policy. Once the common themes were drawn, I discussed them and put emphasis on what the input could mean for future homelessness policy. The decision for this type of analysis comes from the interviewing methodology that I have chosen to implement and provides a more human response on such charged issues as homelessness and affordable housing.

In terms of future efforts, I realize that following up via email would lead to better results in terms of acquiring interviews. With these interviews planned out and conducted, I went about looking into what was being said. What each of my interviewees have said are what lead me to the findings presented within this research. The outcomes of my research are based off of these findings and off of the secondary data researched. These findings and outcomes are presented and displayed in the upcoming section.

Chapter 4: Findings & Outcomes

Findings for this study primarily come from the discussions that I had during my interviews. These interviews revealed many different perspectives and inputs on homelessness and initiative 135, to which these findings influence my recommendation. Within the discussions that I had with my two interviewees, common themes became apparent and as such are something that I seek to explain and analyze. Common themes included (1) excitement of the structure of I-135 and what it might do for Seattle, (2) logistics and utilization of resources and the upcoming growth the plan should utilize, and (3) the importance of community input when creating and operating an initiative like I-135.

Section 3.1: Common Theme #1 Excitement of the structure of I-135

When discussing Question #1 with Interviewee #1, they were most excited about the structure decreasing the number of homeless persons in Seattle because of how new an initiative of this type is for the City of Seattle. They cited that this plan has been very unknown to the United States but has been used in other countries and in a few counties in the U.S. including a plan that they had studied in Maryland. A social approach to housing, as discussed by this interviewee, is something that could hold potential to revolutionize the city's housing market. Within this recently passed initiatives structure, there was a promise of creating a board of members who would create bylaws and determine where to utilize the municipal bonds funding structure of the plan.

The funding structure of Initiative 135 is something that Interviewee #1 found to be the element of the plan that would be most efficient when discussing Question #2. The reasoning that they gave was that the funding structure is uncommon and allows much more flexibility in

what the funds can be spent upon. The funding structure was something that Interviewee #2 discussed when prompted with Question #2 as well but was a perspective of concern rather than excitement. Interviewee #2 talked about how the funding model is good at what it is trying to do in creating mixed-income housing but was concerned that with an entity like I-135 being in the fight against homelessness, there would be more competition for funding sources. Competition, according to Interviewee #2, hurts the efficiency of any program and as such was something that they wanted taken into consideration for the plan.

The structure of I-135 prioritizes the creation of a board of members who determine where they want to build offices during their monthly meetings and who they want to hire to operate social housing sites and to help find sites to be utilized for housing. When discussing Question #1 with Interviewee #2, there was discussion on how the model will do some good for the city, but that it might also be harmful to its own operations and the city. When talking about the success that the plan might have with bringing people indoors, Interviewee #2 discussed that this plan's structure will be a good preventative homelessness measure for some and might be able to help repair income inequality for those like a family that is at risk of falling into homelessness, but that for those experiencing chronic homelessness, it will not be as efficient because cases of homelessness like this need more intensive resources packages.

In terms of the structure of the plan and the written initiative, Interviewee #1 was able to go line-by-line in the plan and knew exactly what the promises of the plan from the structure. When discussing the overall structure and promises that the plan's structure presents to the public, Interviewee #2 had some concerns. While Interviewee #2 did state that they didn't know the plan in its entirety, they were concerned of what promises are core to the structure of the plan. They wanted to be sure that what was being presented to the public of the plan was possible

and reasonable. The importance of not overstating what this initiative for social housing could do was a component of the plan that Interviewee wanted to certain was researched and realistic. Given their positionality, they discussed how in politics, your currency is credibility. When you make promises in initiatives or legislation, and end up falling short, your credibility falls with the public and you are less likely to rally support in the future.

Interviewee #2 suggested a change to the structure and overall operations of initiative 135 for social housing by focusing on a resource's perspective. They said that the social housing initiative is great to have in terms of creating housing, but to make a dent in homelessness, you need to do more. Within their response to Question 1 they stated that "if you want to maintain housing and help your target audience, you need to have housing become a platform for reconnecting to the community, for financial access, and for help in finding employment."

(Interviewee #2, 2023)

Included in the discussion of the structure were the ideas of short- and long-term effects of social housing. The interviewees approached these effects in terms of logistics and what they hope to see from an initiative like this. As such, the discussion of logistics is important to include and to discuss in relation to the perceptions of Initiative 135 for social housing.

Section 3.2: Common Theme #2 Logistics & Utilization of Resources and the Plans Growth

When discussing Questions #1 and #2 with my interviewees, there was a common discussion of what this plan for social housing will do in the short-term and in the long-term for the city. These are included within the discussion of logistics as the terms are informed of the design and actions of the plan themselves. Within these questions, Interviewee #1 stated that the short-term goals of I-135 would be that the City of Seattle has more people off the streets and that the I-135 team is

able to receive more community feedback on how the initiative is affecting the city. Interviewee #2 had a similar response and responded that because social housing is a smaller model when compared to permanent supportive housing, and as such you won't see a large impact until time has passed. This is because while, yes, a couple of social housing mixed income buildings will get some people off the street, that number will be a small amount and will not meet the immediate demand of housing in Seattle.

The long-term effects, as discussed by both interviewees, are going to be much more notable and impactful. Interviewee #1 stated that "in the long-term, we will see housing improve and a notable change in the types of housing units being built and prioritized by the city". (Interviewee #1, 2023) Interviewee #2 supported this idea by discussing that with something as new to the U.S. as social housing is, the returns on the initiative will not be seen within the long term. Though they did address that, in the long-term, this plan will act as a good preventative measure to homelessness and would help with inflow reduction of homeless persons to supportive systems in the City of Seattle.

A logistic of the plan that both interviewees discussed in depth was the struggle over zoning restrictions within the City of Seattle. In response to Question #3, Interviewee #1 discussed that the one component to the plan that they would want changed within the initiative, was to add measures of altering the zoning restrictions in the City of Seattle. The issue that the zoning in the city creates is that it prioritizes single family housing, rather than mixed-income housing. This is something that they are certain the plan will address and seek to improve in the long term. Interviewee #2 was concerned with the zoning and citing in the creation of social mixed-income housing as well. They were concerned with the portion of I-135 where the focus was on using excess or surplus land, because according to Interviewee #2, this is a promise that usually falls

short for the public. The reason for this being that Seattle doesn't have very much land that can realistically be turned into livable properties. That and the conversion of old or decrepit buildings is usually a slow process and very expensive to fully come to fruition.

In terms of the resource utilization, another component of discussion was the staffing and employment process and availability from I-135. During the interview, Interviewee #1 reported that the I-135 team now had a board of members and that the next step would be to hire staff at created locations and to place workers around the area to work toward the goals of the initiative. In this same vein, Interviewee #2 expressed concern that hiring a large workforce is difficult for the key element how expensive it is. The operations cost and cost to hire a larger team, is a consideration that Interviewee #2 was concerned about for this initiative and its future.

In terms of the growth of an initiative like this, or for the passing of similar initiatives, the respondents had similar responses with overlapping ideas. Interviewee #1 discussed how the City of Seattle can have the best intentions but falls short in terms of execution. Politically, the interviewee discussed, there needs to be a focus and drive on building housing and not just on getting the homelessness crisis out of sight. The interviewee discussed how the City of Seattle relocates people, but that that is not a sustainable model. They cited that someone could be relocated several times and still not find affordable, reliable housing. That it is much more efficient to fund housing production for those experiencing homelessness, than it is to relocate someone. Interviewee #2 discussed that a major shortfall of current homelessness initiatives and legislation occur because the people and the city task any homelessness authorities with reducing visible homelessness, rather than on focus on creating resources for those experiencing homelessness. Interviewee #2 stated that there needs to be more of a push to humanize people that experience homelessness and make the response more focused on resources, in addition to

developing housing. They believe that the city will need to be a lot clearer about what the functions and roles of any homelessness authority entity are and that they need to stick that them. The city should not ask the entity to do work outside of its scope and the expectation shouldn't be as such.

These discussions based around logistics and utilization of resources within initiative 135 are based on the perspectives of Interviewee #1 and Interviewee #2. Though another common theme was that of the importance of the community input in the implementation and creation of an initiative for social housing. These perspectives drive the creation of initiatives and, as such, and vital to the discussion of should be included in any plan from a community standpoint.

Section 3.3: Common Theme #3 Importance of Community Input in Initiatives like I-135

The input of the community was a major component of my discussions with both interviewees but from different perspectives around what initiative 135 would do for the City of Seattle. During my interview with Interviewee #1, the discussion of the development of I-135 was heavily prevalent in which they talked about how the community was included in what was included in the initiative. They explicitly stated that they “had talked with community members and included as many community voices as possible in what would be included in the initiative. This was what they used when developing the plan line-by-line, to make the most representative product for the community in the City of Seattle.” (Interviewee #1, 2023). This idea, in tandem with the municipal bond funding mode, allows for the money within the initiative to go toward exactly what the community wants and results in community-based actions plans. The initiative's funding is precise and not watered down as a result, as is standard with similar legislation that was not a creation of a people's initiative. What the community wants is better represented in a

design such as this initiative. However, there was other community feedback, as described by Interviewee #2, that contradicts this point.

Within my discussion of Question #4 with Interviewee #2, the topic of community feedback came up. Interviewee #2 was excited that this plan would help the community but did warn that they were skeptical of the plan because of the feedback that they had heard. They cited that when talking with community members about this plan, this plan would have been best implemented 30 years ago and not today in the present. The reason given for this perception being that 30 years ago there was significantly more land available for the purposes of housing and that the prices of housing could have been implemented for the long-term at a much more affordable price in time. (Interviewee #2, 2023) This perspective was something that Interviewee #2 agreed with and was hopeful that the initiative would be efficient and would make a difference in the City of Seattle. They agreed that if this plan were to be implemented 30 years ago, the mechanism of the initiative could prove to be more potent because the design would preserve housing at a level in which many people could enjoy affordable housing.

Section 3.4: Analysis

When reviewing the transcript for my interviews, it soon became apparent that, within the common themes, the issue of homelessness and housing inequity is a topic that everyone has an opinion on. Most of the feedback, whether it be based on the community or the interviewees, is that something needs to be done to help those experiencing homelessness. Within this report, we see this common theme within Smith and Scotts writings about the perceptions of the homeless and the need for shelter. The conversation around homelessness and the discussion is based upon

the fact that the public wanted something to be done to support those experiencing homelessness, this solution explored in this context is that of I-135 and its work with the KCRHA and the OSHAP.

The research around this topic with both my primary and secondary data indicates how drastic of an issue homelessness and the housing crisis are in the City of Seattle, and further demonstrates how needed responses and programs to improve this issue are. Initiative 135 seeks to help those experiencing homelessness and those that are at risk of homelessness. Coming to this conclusion has come from my discussions with the interviewees. Initiative 135 is not perfect by any means. It is a plan that seeks to create a solution but has room for growth. To which the discussion around zoning, siting, and funding are important to acknowledge within the discussion around the perceptions of I-135. Based on the conversations with my interviewees, and the secondary data, the goals that initiative 135 seek to fulfill will be successful. The goal of housing people will be achieved, though on a smaller scale and the impact will not be seen to the public until the long-term.

I do think that my perception of the initiative has become much more realistic and optimistic based on the research within this report. What I have read and discussed with people has led me to understand the work with at I-135 is seeking to do and has allowed me to see where it can improve over time. It is my firm belief that this plan has been developed with the best intentions and will hold an impact on the city. Though, in terms of the room for growth, I do think that this, and any iteration of a similar initiative or legislation, can be improved by being more resource focused. My conversation with Interviewee #2 brought up a good point that providing affordable housing for people is a step in the right direction, but to keep people supported, there needs to be a focus on more resource allocation. In the context of I-135, I know

that the plan was not marketed to solve homelessness, but that it was designed to create mixed-income housing for many people. This plan will create housing for many and will be helpful for a small number of people, at first. I do believe that this initiative that I've researched will have an impact in the long-term because making any housing is a success.

This impact seems as though it will be similar to what the OSHAP has done and holds the potential to prove revolutionary for the City of Seattle. Within my thoughts on Initiative 135 for Social Housing, I find that there are areas for improvement such as seeking more support from the city in terms of zoning, seeking assistance for development of sites for housing, and a more collaborative approach with other housing entities in the city to ensure that housing is created as efficient as possible. These suggestions come from a personal standpoint of excitement for what I-135 could do for the city, but also from a standpoint of improvement upon the initiative.

Improvements and recommendations for a plan based around creation of affordable housing are vital to take into consideration given how vital the situation is quickly becoming in the city of Seattle. I want the city to create more housing for all, I would also like to see these groups for housing working together to help all the people in Seattle, rather than competing for funding and leading to a housing development gridlock.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

What I-135 seeks to do for housing in Seattle is a cause that is needed for the development of the city. The research conducted in this paper has provided me with a significantly better idea of this exact point and has shown that there needs to be people working to improve housing for all. Not just housing for some. As a result, the social housing approach is something that will hold an impact in that it will house people. This idea in relation to my secondary sources and all the data that was discussed during my interviews have shown me what efforts the City of Seattle have made to help housing, and by extension, homelessness and makes the future seem hopeful.

I conclude that for homelessness to be bettered in the city, there needs to be more focus on creating affordable, mixed-income housing for all. But just creating housing is not enough to end homelessness or the housing crisis in the City of Seattle. The focus should be on developing programs for housing and on resources allocation for those seeking housing. These resources should be focused upon keeping people in housing by helping connect those to the community, finding employment and financial aspects as was discussed within my interview with Interviewee #2. In addition to this recommendation, I recommend that once an entity has been voted in or in development, there needs to be a very clear and coherent understanding of what said entity will do and what it has been tasked or promised to do. The goal of this clarification is that it will allow for the initiative to be more realistic to the public and will allow for more defined operations within the housing entity. The focus of this entity should be reliably housing people and providing them with resources as described above. Within this policy recommendation, I recommend that funding be allocated toward creating as many of these social housing types as physically or practically possible within the city in order to house as many people as possible. Rather than focusing on the relocation of people, there needs to be a major

focus on creation of housing and moving away from the standard single-family housing that Seattle typically constructs. This research and interviews on I-135 and other materials has taught me that in policy development you really need to have the community on your side and not only willing, but wanting, to help solve the issue. This is the only way that you can develop a policy that is representative of the people and something that the City of Seattle can support because of the community backing and the community demand of more affordable housing.

Reflecting on this issue and research has led me to the conclusion that there is no one size fits all solution to solve homelessness or the housing crisis as fast as possible. I've learned that to make changes in the fight against homelessness, you need the people on your side, and you need to find a way to make the plan appealing and non-legislative. This way the community input can be heard and taken into the fullest account in creating housing. The interviews that I've conducted within this research have led me to better understand housing policy. Building housing is not the only solution when it comes to reducing homelessness or the creation of affordable housing. This is not the way to address the root causes of homelessness in Seattle. Housing is the first step, but there also needs to be more resources given to those seeking housing to ensure that they stay housed.

Reflecting upon all that I have heard, read, and experienced within this research, my perception on I-135 is positive, but a bit skeptical. I do think that the plan will have an impact on the City of Seattle, but that more needs to be done to have a significant long-term impact on the city that the public can perceive as having a massive impact. I believe that the housing crisis will get better because of the passing of I-135 and that if it continues to fulfill its promises to the city, there will be good outcomes and changes will come in the housing market in the City of Seattle. Though, that more resources and collaborations will need to be added onto the initiative for long-

term success in housing. I-135 is an incredible initiative that holds major potential to change the city, and this is something that I truly believe that the plan will do to the city based off all of my research and studies.

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