



## HOUSING & HOPE

A monthly email series on housing & homelessness.

### CCS/CHS and the New Thea Bowman Apartments

Catholic Community Services (CCS) and Catholic Housing Services (CHS) are the official human service outreach arms of the Catholic Church, and work in tandem to provide a full spectrum of social services across Western Washington. Understanding the importance of housing stability to both personal and community health, CCS/CHS strives to provide holistic services that equip clients with the resources they need to be successful. Research on the relationship between housing and health has [indicated](#) that “housing stability, quality, safety, and affordability all affect health outcomes, as do physical and social characteristics of neighborhoods.” Therefore, the partnership between CCS and CHS focuses on building stability for individuals and their communities through the provision of affordable housing, supportive services, and community development.

CCS and CHS work together to serve and support vulnerable populations through the provision of quality, integrated services and housing. CHS owns and operates permanent rental housing properties, which includes developing the property, leasing, and maintaining the buildings. CCS offers intensive case management and other supportive services to residents of CHS properties. This month’s Housing & Hope story will chronicle the development of the latest CCS/CHS property, the Thea Bowman Apartments, both in honor of its [recent blessing](#), and as an illustration of the partnership between CCS and CHS.



[Source](#): King County, 2016

The development of Kent's Thea Bowman apartments began, as many CCS/CHS projects do, with the realization that specific community needs were not being met. In 2016, south King County was identified as an underserved area with a need for permanent supportive housing programs and was encouraging providers to respond to this need, and our staff noted a paralleled lack of CCS/CHS programs in the area. CCS, through the Kent Community Engagement Center, had been working in the community for many years, which allowed CCS staff to form close connections with a number of individuals with long histories of homelessness in the area. Many of these individuals had deep ties to the community and were unwilling to explore housing options outside of their comfort zone. CCS and CHS staff thus began to explore the process of developing permanent supportive housing outside of the greater Seattle Metropolitan area.

A three-year feasibility period followed – where would a new site be located? How would the building be designed? Who would the program serve? CCS and CHS began working closely with the City of Kent to implement affordable housing in an active partnership with the city. Together, they explored a number of land parcels around Kent, vetting each with city officials to ensure the property would be zoned correctly, in line with CHS and the city's development plans, and able to accommodate the amenities needed. Finally, a northwestern property seemed to check all the boxes for CCS, CHS, and for the City of Kent.

In collaboration with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), it was decided that the new project, the first permanent supportive housing program in Kent, would have a portion of units specifically designated for veterans. Funding was secured in partnership with the Washington State Housing Trust Fund, Raymond James Financial (through the purchase of low-income housing tax credits) and with the help of Section 8 housing vouchers provided by King County and VASH vouchers through the VA and HUD. Construction of the Thea Bowman Apartments began in 2019 and was completed in mid-2020. While the process moved at a slower rate due to safety protocols associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Inslee's March 2020 determination that affordable and permanent supportive housing constitute essential services allowed construction to continue even when other developments were halted.



Thea Bowman Apartments, 2020

The Thea Bowman apartments welcomed its new residents in November, many of whom were long-term clients of the Kent Community Engagement Center. Each resident was greeted with a Welcome Home move-in basket filled with treats and household supplies, courtesy of a Catholic School Drive effort coordinated by CCS/CHS staff, Erin Maguire, Network Builder, and Lauren Pusich, Pastoral Mission Coordinator. Many thanks to the students from Kennedy Catholic High, St. Madeleine Sophie, St. Anthony, St. Francis and St. Philomena schools, as well as the St. Luke and St. Theresa of Calcutta Knights of Columbus! As Sharonda Duncan, Program Manager of Thea Bowman Apartments explains, "The donations meant the world to Thea Bowman. They gave the new residents a chance to settle in without having the stress of worrying about household items."



Welcome Home Basket for new residents, 2020

The apartments consist of eighty permanent supportive housing units, 36 of which are reserved for veterans and paid for through the VA voucher program. The other 44 units are for formerly homeless individuals who receive standard vouchers through King County Housing Authority. The units are a mix of studio and one-bedrooms, each fully furnished and equipped with a kitchenette. The building includes a multi-purpose room with computer access for residents, a gym and exercise room, a courtyard and dog run, as well as community kitchens and laundry rooms on each floor. The first floor also houses the nurse's office. In collaboration with the VA, onsite case management services are provided by CCS

with the goal of meeting each residents' unique needs through effective communication that is adaptable, stability-focused, and trauma-informed.



Thea Bowman Apartments, 2020

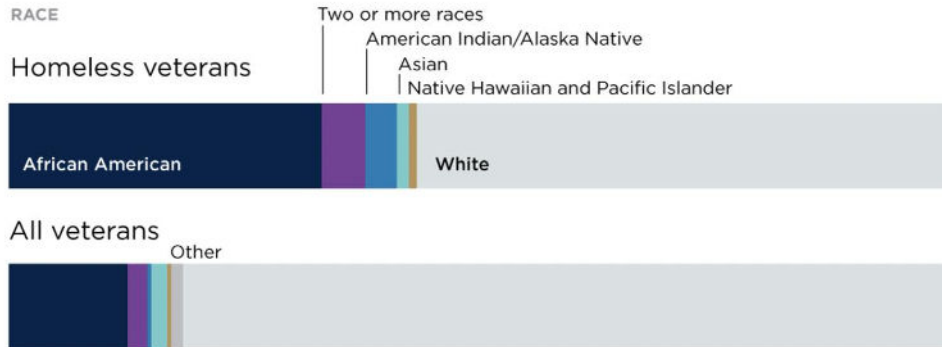
Community connection, as well as the onsite case management and supportive services, are central to the philosophy of permanent supportive housing (PSH). "We are always excited to be able to build new projects in communities where residents will have access to a lot of resources - grocery stores, transportation and other amenities for residents," said Joshua Jeremy, CHS Housing and Community Developer. "We are happy to be able to provide affordable housing in communities where there is a lot of room for growth into the overall community." PSH models provide affordable, long-term housing as well as voluntary case management and social service programs for people with disabilities and experiencing chronic homelessness.

Targeted social services programs are particularly important given the diverse experiences of homelessness and the varied goals and needs of clients. The homeless veteran population is no exception and has seen a decline in supportive services in the last few years. HUD's [2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report](#) notes that only 15% of all beds in shelters across the county were specifically reserved for veterans experiencing chronic homelessness.



## People of Color Make Up a Disproportionate Share of the Homeless Veteran Population

Race and ethnicity of veterans experiencing homelessness compared with the general veteran population



[Source](#): National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2017

Further, while African Americans represent 12.3% of the U.S. veteran population, they are overrepresented in the totals of sheltered and unsheltered veterans: "African Americans comprised 33% of veterans experiencing homelessness and 25% of veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness." Those identifying as Hispanic or Latino account for 11% of the total veteran population, but 17% of veterans experiencing homelessness.

Such statistics underscore the importance of investments in affordable housing and for continued calls against rental and housing discrimination. CCS/CHS is proud to serve individuals of all backgrounds and to continue to develop programs that support the specific needs of the diverse communities across Western Washington. As Dan Wise, King County Director of Homeless Services, so rightly says, "To be a small part in bringing someone into stable housing, in the community that they themselves are grounded and rooted in and committed to, is why we do this work!"



Sister Thea Bowman. [Source](#): The Catholic University of America

The commitment to honoring and upholding cultural integrity was a central focus for Sr. Thea Bowman as well. Sr. Thea, F.S.P.A., Ph.D., was born in 1937, the granddaughter of an enslaved man. Before turning 16, Sr. Thea “converted to Catholicism and became the only African American woman among the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration,” according to her [alma mater](#), The Catholic University of America. A deep fascination and love of art and literature guided her studies, as did her passion for equality and the advancement of African Americans both within American society and the Church. After receiving degrees from Viterbo College and The Catholic University of America in Washington, Sr. Thea began teaching at schools across the East Coast. She implemented the first Black literature course at The Catholic University of America. As Boston College [writes](#), “Through song, dance, poetry, drama and story, she communicated joy, freedom and pride, using traditional Black teaching techniques that are holistic, participatory and reality focused.”

If you would like to learn more about a particular issue as it relates to the impact of race on experiencing homelessness, please contact Sienna at [SiennaH@ccsww.org](mailto:SiennaH@ccsww.org). If you received this email from an outside source, please [sign up](#) if you would like to receive our monthly Housing & Hope emails directly. For an archive of each month’s story, please visit the [series homepage](#).

