



# A CRISIS FESTERS

Ten years ago, homelessness was declared a state of emergency in Seattle and King County.

Today, the unsheltered population in the region remains among the highest in the country.

A man lies on the ground in a sleeping bag on the Marion Street pedestrian overpass in 2018.

**“IT’S A LONG-TERM PROBLEM THAT REQUIRES A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT.”**

Claudia Balducci, former King County Council member

**S**haretha Simons hasn’t always needed help with housing. At 64 years old, the grandmother is warm and friendly, with an infectious smile. She once worked as a health care aide for people with dementia, raised six children of her own and opened her home to foster kids.

But after a family member who helped her financially died in 2011, Simons’ life began to unravel. Her disability payments after a workplace injury were not enough to cover her rent, prompting her to make a life-altering decision.

“I had been living with my grandpa, who had been paying all the bills,” she says. “After he died, I moved into Crescent Point Apartments and started selling drugs so I could pay rent. But after I was caught, I couldn’t sell drugs anymore, which meant I couldn’t afford my apartment. My income wasn’t enough.”

Her arrest was a turning point. Through King County’s Adult Drug Diversion Court – a voluntary program that supports people in recovery – Simons connected with Plymouth Housing. She’s been living in one of its units in downtown Seattle since 2013.

“Now I have a nice, safe place to live,” she says. “I am so blessed to be here.”

Simons was fortunate. For thousands of others across King County, housing stability remains out of reach.

Ten years ago, Seattle and King County declared a state of emergency over the region’s growing homelessness crisis. It was a urgent call to unlock funding, drive policy change and rally public support. But a decade later, many say the declaration has amounted to stale symbolism – an otherwise forgotten gesture.



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CONTINUED ON PAGE 14