



Mayor Lisa Brown

The City of Spokane applauds the Safe and Healthy Task Force members and regional leaders who invested time and resources in service of the greater Spokane community. We are encouraged by the thoughtful, comprehensive recommendations and agree that there are several opportunities ripe for immediate investments to enhance community health and safety across the region.

These recommendations arrive at an inflection point: crime statistics are trending down not just here in Spokane, but across the country. Locally, we have realized double digit declines in most Part I violent and property crime categories. Overdose statistics are plateauing, and data from the Point-in-Time Count and Longitudinal Systems Analysis indicates a countywide decrease in the number of unhoused individuals for the second year in a row, a decrease in the number of people utilizing the homeless system, as well as an increase in the number of people exiting the system to permanent housing. At the same time, Spokane County Detention Services' recruitment and retention continue to struggle, resulting in an understaffed jail that takes a real toll on its employees, requires near 24-hour lockdown for the downtown jail population, and hinders the creation or expansion of treatment and programming in jail designed to increase stability and reduce rearrest.

While the City generally supports each of the Task Force's recommendations, we submit that prioritization is a critical component of effective, financially responsible implementation.

A few key investments will measurably improve safety and stability across the region, alleviate the strain on an understaffed and aging jail, and inform the scope of remaining recommendations, including whether there is a need for additional, costly correctional capacity or whether utilization/renovation of existing facilities is feasible. Indeed, the Leifman report and Task Force conclude that our region has many of the necessary resources. It is now a critical matter of scaling and coordinating meaningfully with short, mid, and long term goals in mind.

Specifically, the City recommends prioritizing the following:

- Establish a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) that centers data and drives the implementation of Task Force recommendations.

The City agrees with the Task Force that a formal advisory body is necessary to sustain the momentum of the Task Force and guide programming and process improvements. This committee could take different forms, however the City recommends modeling the committee on a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC).¹

¹ [National Standards for CJCCs Revised September 2025 TE](#)

- CJCC’s include representation from across the criminal legal system in addition to elected officials, administrators, and community experts to identify challenges, leverage resources, and drive solutions.
- The CJCC should include diverse representation including but not limited to: community leaders across the sequential intercepts (e.g. healthcare, behavioral health, housing), individuals with lived experience, and survivors of crime.
- The CJCC must center data driven decision-making. This can be integrated through a CJCC Data Committee.
- Improve conditions of confinement immediately through appropriate staffing and robust pre-trial services.

The region should not wait to secure additional dollars or perfect plans before taking steps to improve conditions immediately for the individuals incarcerated in the Spokane County Jail, as well as for the employees who staff it. Adequate staffing is a primary factor contributing to the current conditions of confinement. If fully staffed, Detention Services could transition back to direct observation. This means individuals could move about their tiers freely, rather than being locked in their cells for 23 hours each day with only an hour to choose between showers, haircuts, family phone calls, and exercise. Full staffing would also nearly eliminate red light status for law enforcement agencies waiting to book individuals into the jail. We support the County’s separate engagement with CGL to conduct population forecasting that considers different scenarios and suggest the County also conducts a workload analysis to determine baseline staffing needs.

As the County continues to address Detention Services staffing challenges, the region should immediately:

- Pilot a robust pre-trial services model at intake. Jurisdictions like Pima County, AZ have established Pre-Trial Services programs that assess individuals prior to jail booking and release eligible individuals to case management, rather than pre-trial incarceration.² This ensures that individuals who are safe to remain in the community do so, maintaining work, education and family obligations, while reserving limited criminal justice capacity for those who cannot.³
- Expand Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) services in jail. This could entail expanding the work of the Spokane Regional Health District’s Opioid Treatment Program and/or other MAT providers coming into the jail to enroll and dose new patients. Enrollment can occur in attorney visit booths, decreasing the demand on staffing.

² [Transition Center | Pima County, AZ.](#)

³ Even a brief imprisonment in jail before trial has a demonstrably criminogenic effect. In one study, researchers found that pretrial detention is associated with a 30% increase in new felony charges and a 20% increase in new misdemeanor charges, suggesting that “pretrial detention has a greater criminogenic than deterrent effect.” [Reducing Jail Overcrowding Without Increasing Crime](#)

- Pilot population review teams. Comprised of a judicial officer, prosecutor, public defender and pre-trial services officer, PRTs meet weekly to review the incarcerated pre-trial population and identify individuals who can be safely released on their own recognizance or with appropriate release conditions.

Research indicates that these interventions will likely decrease the ADP of the jail population, thereby informing the need for future capital projects.

- Immediately Coordinate Investment of Existing Resources to expand behavioral health and housing

Several Task Force recommendations hinge on additional resources for services - primarily behavioral health services. The region must fully leverage these revenue streams and coordinate their use to quickly increase housing and behavioral health resources. Potential revenue streams include, but are not limited to:

- Since 2020, the State has authorized a 1/10 of 1% sales and use tax for housing and related services. Up to 40% of the generated revenue can fund behavioral health services, and the remaining 60% can be used toward capital projects. Since adoption by the City of Spokane in 2020, the City's HEART Fund has funded 77 housing units and allocated an additional \$3.6M to support families impacted by domestic violence, substance use disorder treatment, and case management.
- Spokane County's Mental Health Sales Tax is a 1/10 of 1% sales tax for chemical dependency, mental health, and therapeutic courts. This tax funds programs like the Spokane Regional County Crisis Stabilization Center, Mental Health Court, and the Spokane Fire Department's Behavioral Response Expansion.
- Opioid Settlement dollars from Washington State's settlement against opioid manufacturers. The City and County are both parties to the One Washington MOU that dictates settlement distribution to cities and counties across the state as well as eligible uses for the funds. The City and County have made separate investments with their settlement allocations in addition to working collaboratively to fund Maddie's Place and expanded sobering beds.

There are additional revenue and partnership opportunities currently available to jurisdictions that merit exploration and could play a beneficial role in bringing resources to the table in an equitable way.

The City of Spokane is grateful for the work of the Safe & Healthy Task Force and wholeheartedly endorses the Task Force's central premise that we are not safe unless we are healthy, and we are not healthy unless we are safe. That is precisely why over the course of this Administration we have overseen investments in homelessness interventions including, but not limited to:

- Citywide outreach teams that respond to individuals who are unhoused or in distress, connecting them to appropriate resources along with the daytime Navigation Center that provides transportation, case management, and behavioral health treatment seven days a week
- HEART allocations in housing and behavioral health services
- Deployment of \$3.3 million dollars in opioid settlement funds to expand Spokane Fire’s social work team, pilot a High Utilizer Initiative, and make joint investments with the County.

Finally, we have also separately worked with the County and Frontier Behavioral Health to expand the City’s Behavioral Response Team, which now operates six days a week from 9:00am to 9:00pm.

As we collectively move forward, it will be important to clearly identify how Task Force recommendations will be implemented, who will be responsible for carrying them out, and what resources will be needed to ensure their success. With thoughtful coordination and accountability, we believe we can turn these ideas and opportunities into meaningful action.

Sincerely,



Lisa Brown

Mayor, City of Spokane



Kevin Hall

Police Chief, City of Spokane