



**PalAmerican**  
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**SECURITY**

**Guide:**

## Addressing the Rising Unhoused Population in Seattle & Bellevue

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Empower your team to manage public space concerns with empathy, safety,  
and professionalism.

## Understanding the Crisis in Seattle & Bellevue

The Seattle and Bellevue metro areas are experiencing a significant surge in the unhoused population. As of the 2024 Point-in-Time Count, King County reported over 14,000 individuals experiencing homelessness—a 22% increase since 2022. Seattle alone accounted for more than 10,000 of those individuals, while Bellevue’s numbers have doubled over the past five years.

This rise has been exacerbated by housing costs, substance use disorders, mental health challenges, and pandemic-era economic instability. Local governments have declared states of emergency, but the crisis continues to strain public spaces, infrastructure, and resources.

### Key Contributing Factors

- **Housing Affordability:** Seattle ranks among the top five most expensive U.S. cities to rent or own property. Wages have not kept pace with housing costs, pushing low-income residents into homelessness.
- **Mental Health and Substance Use:** Roughly 45% of King County’s unhoused population live with untreated mental health conditions, often co-occurring with substance abuse disorders.
- **Lack of Shelter Capacity:** Despite increased funding, local shelters and transitional housing options remain at or over capacity.



## Legislative & Governmental Responses

- **Right of Way Initiative (2022):** Washington State and King County collaborated to remove encampments from public right-of-way areas, particularly near roadways and underpasses.
- **U.S. Supreme Court Ruling (2024):** Affirmed the right of municipalities to ban public camping even when shelter is unavailable, paving the way for expanded encampment removals.
- **Seattle’s “One Roof” Initiative (2023):** Consolidated homelessness response across agencies to streamline outreach and increase housing placements.

Still, enforcement of these initiatives remains inconsistent, leaving property managers, retailers, and municipalities with the burden of managing public safety and sanitation concerns.



## Media Coverage & Public Sentiment

### “Seattle’s Homeless Camps Grow Despite City Clean-ups” – Seattle Times, Feb 2024

This article details how, despite the city’s efforts to remove encampments, the number and visibility of homeless camps have grown throughout Seattle. It emphasizes the cyclical nature of cleanups and re-encampment, the lack of adequate shelter space, and community frustration. [Read Article](#)

### “Bellevue Businesses Push Back Against Growing Encampments” – KING 5 News, Jan 2024

Businesses in Bellevue have voiced increasing concern about the impact of encampments on commerce and public safety. This report includes statements from local business owners, city officials, and residents who are calling for more consistent enforcement and long-term solutions. [Read Article](#)

### “Downtown Seattle Retailers Demand Greater Safety Measures” – KIRO 7 News, Mar 2024

Downtown retailers are lobbying for stronger action from city leaders amid rising theft, vandalism, and aggressive behavior from individuals experiencing homelessness. The story captures how security concerns are influencing foot traffic and revenue, and how some businesses are turning to private security firms for help. [Read Article](#)

These reports reflect growing frustration among residents and business owners who feel overwhelmed and unsupported by current efforts.

## Impact by Sector

### 1. Commercial Real Estate

Challenges: Unhoused individuals setting up encampments near or on commercial property can lead to loitering, vandalism, sanitation concerns, and deter potential tenants or customers. This often results in declining property values and increased operational costs.

PalAmerican's Response:

- Deployment of highly visible patrol officers trained in de-escalation and compassionate engagement.
- Perimeter checks and detailed incident reporting to identify vulnerable entry points and recurring issues.
- Coordination with local police and social service partners to ensure humane enforcement of no-camping ordinances and trespass laws.



## 2. High-Rises

Challenges: Downtown high-rise buildings—especially mixed-use office and residential towers—often face unauthorized entry attempts, elevator loitering, and encampments in underground garages or alleyways.

PalAmerican's Response:

- Concierge-style officers who deliver both tenant-facing customer service and vigilant security enforcement.
- Integrated surveillance monitoring via our Security Operations Center (SOC) to support 24/7 visibility.
- Enforcement of access control procedures and emergency preparedness planning with building management.

## 3. Transit

Challenges: Transit hubs and bus stops are frequent gathering places for unhoused individuals, creating operational disruptions and raising safety concerns for commuters and transit staff.

PalAmerican's Response:

- Transit-specific officers equipped to engage respectfully and resolve conflicts using trauma-informed communication.
- On-site presence at terminals, platforms, and park-and-rides to discourage illicit activity and provide commuter reassurance.
- Partnering with transit authorities to enforce code of conduct policies and collaborate with behavioral health teams where applicable.



## Our Differentiated Approach: Compassion & Control

PalAmerican believes in balancing empathy with effective protection. We:

- Train all personnel in trauma-informed de-escalation.
- Establish clear property boundaries and policies.
- Use AI-powered surveillance to monitor encampment growth.
- Connect with outreach groups to direct unhoused individuals to services.

Our officers aren't just guards—they're trained liaisons helping businesses uphold safety while preserving dignity.



## Partner with PalAmerican

Security challenges tied to homelessness require a sensitive yet strategic response. PalAmerican provides:

- On-site guard services and mobile patrols
- Remote SOC surveillance with 24/7 monitoring
- Security consulting, risk assessments, and vulnerability audits
- Custom de-escalation and situational training for property teams

Let us help you manage the complexities of public space concerns with confidence and compassion.



Contact us today to learn more or schedule a free consultation.

Cory Tordillos PalAmerican Security

T. 425.454.5011 C. 425.652.8064 E: [ctordillos@palamerican.com](mailto:ctordillos@palamerican.com)

900 SW 16th St. Suite 315, Renton, WA 98057