The motivation for this book stemmed from Gregg’s observation that the roots of the homelessness crisis in many cities in the United States were being misdiagnosed, often to frustrating and harmful ends. A public focus on mental health and drugs—certainly, important risk factors for homelessness—dominates narratives in our home in the Puget Sound region, thereby narrowing the policy conversation. In discussions with stakeholders throughout the region, it became apparent that an intense focus on behavioral health might be masking a more important root cause of this crisis: housing market conditions.

Gregg shared the early vision for this book in 2019 with colleagues throughout the Seattle region. One such conversation proved to be particularly valuable and changed the course of this book project. Rogers Weed, then board chair of Building Changes (a nonprofit focused on homelessness), introduced the two authors of this book. After a number of productive and engaging conversations, Clayton and Gregg decided to collaborate on this project. The two of us collaborated on the analysis,
Gregg wrote the majority of the manuscript, and Clay applied his expertise in data visualization to the images found in this book. In a sure sign of a productive partnership, this final product is far better than any that would have resulted from a solitary effort.

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