

Affordable Housing NOW!

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Affordable Housing NOW!?

AHN was initiated by the Coalition for a Livable Future (CLF), Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT), and Community Development Network (CDN). It is a coalition of individuals and organizations working to secure a new, ongoing source of funding for affordable housing in the Portland metro area.

What do you mean by "affordable housing"?

The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as paying no more than 30% of your income for housing. We at Affordable Housing Now! are particularly concerned about the lack of housing that is affordable for people with low incomes, specifically for people who make less than 30% of the Portland metro region's Median Family Income (MFI). The 2003 Median Family Income for a single person is \$46,050, and it is \$65,800 for a family of four. For a single person earning 30% MFI (\$13,800 per year), affordable monthly rent would be \$345. Examples of people earning this income are workers at a slightly less than full time minimum wage job, such as a fast food worker or service station attendant. Affordable monthly rent for a four-person family earning 30% MFI (\$19,700 per year) would be \$493. Examples of a family earning this income are a full time preschool or special ed. teacher, janitor, or laborer with three children earning \$9.50 an hour.

How is AHN funded?

The staffing for AHN is funded by the members of CAT, CDN, and CLF, by grassroots support through individual contributions, and by private foundations, including United Way. This campaign could not be possible without the involvement of many volunteers.

Isn't affordable housing the federal government's job?

Federal funding for affordable housing has been steadily shrinking for the past thirty years. In the economic boom of the 1990s, housing prices in the Portland area rose much more rapidly than incomes, leading to our current crisis. While we need to continue advocating for federal funding for affordable housing, we cannot wait for the federal government to come up with a solution. We need to do it ourselves. Some regions across the country are doing much better at funding affordable housing than we are here in Portland. Seattle has passed affordable housing levies on three separate

occasions, Florida has created a real estate transfer tax, and California voters just approved a \$2.1 billion affordable housing trust fund. Local solutions are possible. It's time for us to take action to bring these solutions home.

Isn't this a bad time to be talking about funding?

Progressive change is more likely to happen at a time such as this when our communities are challenged to think creatively, than at a time when people are satisfied with the status quo. Low income people and people who depend on social services are being hardest hit by our state's budget cuts and the economic downturn. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 32% of all families in the Portland metro area do not have affordable housing. This is unacceptable. Now is the best time to solve our region's affordable housing crisis.

Will more affordable housing decrease property values in my neighborhood?

Contrary to popular beliefs created by a few widely publicized problems, most publicly subsidized housing in the region is well designed and well managed. Many neighborhoods contain publicly subsidized housing that you would never know is subsidized. It was designed to fit into the existing community, is well cared for, and can have a positive effect on the value of surrounding properties. Sufficient funding for affordable housing can help ensure that it is high quality.

What can I do to help?/ How can I get involved?

- Sign the AHN Declaration and ask your friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and community organizations to sign the declaration
- Join the AHN Action Alert email list
- Give a donation to AHN
- Join the AHN speakers bureau
- Join AHN's policy research committee, community outreach committee, or RETF action committee
- Volunteer behind the scenes: help make phone calls, prepare mailings, or do data entry

How can I get more information or get involved?

For more information, go to www.cdnportland.org or contact **Ian Slingerland at (503) 460-9702 or iancat@aracnet.com**