

Affordable Housing NOW!

A Campaign to End Our Regional Affordable Housing Crisis

Our purpose is

To secure new, ongoing sources of funding necessary to address the shortage of housing affordable to people living in communities throughout Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties.

Affordable Housing NOW!: Who we are

Initiated by the Coalition for A Livable Future (CLF), the Community Development Network (CDN) and the Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT), Affordable Housing NOW! is a movement of individuals and organizations acting to address the Portland metropolitan region's affordable housing shortage and the devastating impact it has on our families and communities.

To get involved

- ★ Sign the attached declaration, fill out the coupon on back and mail or fax it to CAT
 - ★ Get your organization and friends to sign the declaration
 - ★ Attend the next action or meeting
 - ★ Volunteer your time and skills- Call Sarah Buckley at CAT- 503.460.9702
-

Housing is Opportunity

Home is a fundamental human need. With a place to call home, children are more successful in school, families have a foundation to grow their dreams, and seniors and people with disabilities can live with independence and dignity. Unfortunately, for most of our region's low-income renters having a safe, accessible, affordable place to call home is only a dream. In Portland, only one third of people qualified for housing assistance are getting help to make their housing affordable¹. Families without affordable housing are forced to crowd together and double-up in housing, or they are forced to make unthinkable choices between housing costs and food or healthcare. We believe that hardworking people should be able to afford housing and still have enough money for groceries and other basics. We believe that seniors and people with disabilities need safe, stable, accessible housing so that they the opportunity to live with independence and dignity. We believe that our community is stronger when we all have a place to call home.

Housing: A Regional Affordability Crisis

No matter how you look at it, the housing crisis is startling, and without our action it is poised to get much, much worse.

- ❑ In Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties, **32% of all families do not have affordable housing²**, and for low-income families the problem is far greater. The American Housing Survey Data estimated that **82% of all households in the region earning less than 30% of Median Family Income (MFI)³ are in need of affordable housing.**
- ❑ Metro Regional Government's *Regional Affordable Housing Strategy* found a need for more than **90,000 units of new housing** affordable to households earning less than 50% of MFI in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties. These estimates were made prior to the recent downturn in the economy.
- ❑ Multnomah County's Winter, 2005 "One Night Shelter Count" found **2,752 people in the shelter system and an additional 1,020 people turned away for lack of capacity.** These numbers include 602 families with children. A Winter 2005 'Street Count' in Multnomah County found an additional 2,355 people sleeping outside in Portland. In Clackamas County, a January 2005 'Homeless Count' found 2,484 people without housing, including 983 children.
- ❑ **The wage needed to afford a 2-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent is \$13.79/hr**, leaving affordable housing well out of reach for most low-wage workers and households on fixed incomes⁴.
- ❑ Multnomah County needs **7,890 more units of permanent affordable supportive housing** for people with severe and persistent mental illness, substance abuse, and developmental, serious physical/functional, or multiple disabilities⁵.

¹ *Affordable Housing in Portland*, City Club of Portland, 2002

² 2000 U.S. Census

³ Each year HUD establishes Median Family Income (MFI) for various household sizes using census and other relevant data. MFI for a one-person household is \$40,500. MFI for a four-person household is \$57,200. 30% of MFI for a single person is \$12,000 and \$17,150 for a family of four. 50% of MFI is \$20,000 for a single and \$28,600 for a family of four.

⁴ *Out of Reach*, National Low-Income Housing Coalition, 2004

⁵ *Defining the Need for Affordable Housing in the Portland Region*, City of Portland, Bureau of Housing and Community Development, 2003

Why do we care?

Because we care about Kids and Education

Children deserve an opportunity to succeed in school and life, which is tied to having a stable home. Research shows that low-income children in the Portland Metro Area have to move a lot. Families often can't afford rent increases and have to move to smaller or more poorly maintained homes. Schools report that as many as 25–30% of their students move out of their school area during the year. Children forced to change schools frequently have little opportunity for academic success. Further, the instability in the classroom caused by constantly shifting enrollment makes learning more difficult for all our kids.

Because we care about Families and Hunger

Hardworking people should be able to afford housing and still have enough money for groceries and other basic necessities. Oregon has hunger rates nearly double the national average. Families go hungry because we cannot stretch our income to cover all our necessary expenses. Rent is a huge portion of a low-income family's budget – often 50%–75% of our income. The Oregon Food Bank reports that 50% of households that receive emergency food boxes spend over 48% of their income on housing. 25% of the households spend 76% of their income on housing⁶.

Because we care about Seniors and People with Disabilities

Housing gives seniors and people with disabilities an opportunity to build better lives. Unfortunately, because most seniors and people with disabilities are on limited, fixed incomes, the rising cost of housing in the Portland Metro area has left many of our most vulnerable community members out in the cold. Additionally, cutbacks to the Oregon Health Plan, prescription drug benefits, mental health support services, and federal housing programs combined with increasing utility costs and the lack of existing accessible housing have created a major crisis for our seniors and people with disabilities. Housing and financial instability exacerbates health conditions, often resulting in costly medical emergencies. To help seniors and people with disabilities succeed independently, they need a place to call home.

Because we care about Community Stability

Everyone deserves a safe, decent place to live in our community. The rising cost of housing leaves many families living on the edge, searching throughout the region for housing they can afford. When rising housing costs force long time community residents out of our neighborhoods, they often have to move to places with fewer community services, less public transportation service, less local employment opportunities and poorer housing. People who are displaced lose contact with long-time neighbors or fellow community members who may assist with shopping, home maintenance, and trips to the doctor. Communities are stronger when they are stable.

Because we care about Livability and the Environment

The livability of a community is directly tied to the housing security of its residents. When workers or students cannot afford housing in the communities in which they work or go to school, commute times increase, reducing time for families and civic activities. Traffic congestion increases, creating more pollution and frustration for everybody. Household budgets are further stretched to pay for additional transportation costs.

Because together we have the power to shape the future of our communities!

Despite the magnitude of the housing crisis in the Metro area, we can make safe, stable, affordable housing available to all who live in our region by organizing for new sources to fund affordable housing. In 2004, in a tough budget climate, Affordable Housing NOW! successfully advocated for \$11 million from the City of Portland for housing for people at the lowest incomes. Though \$11 million does not remotely meet the housing need of our communities, the victory is a first step in building a movement that makes housing a top community priority.

What we can do

Affordable Housing NOW! will identify, select and win new housing funding initiative campaigns around the region until the housing need is met. If you are sick and tired of trying to figure out how to pay next month's rent, JOIN US. If you believe in protecting our schools, reducing traffic congestion and creating safer neighborhoods, JOIN US. If you are fed up with dwindling resources and continued cutbacks, JOIN US. If you believe that everybody deserves safe, stable and affordable housing, JOIN US.

⁶ 2000 Hunger Factors Assessment, Oregon Food Bank, 2000