



of

WASHINGTON COUNTY

The Need for Safe, Decent, Affordable Housing in Washington County

Most Americans agree that hardworking families, seniors and people with disabilities should be able to afford housing and still have enough left over to pay for food, prescriptions and other necessities. However, across Washington County, the cost of housing has moved out of reach of ordinary citizens.

- A retired worker dependent on Social Security earns, on average, \$10,572 a year; a disabled veteran whose only income is derived from a pension receives, on average, \$9,729 a year. To afford a one-bedroom apartment in Washington County, an individual needs to earn \$25,000 a year.
- A school bus driver earning \$12.50 an hour can afford to pay only \$650 a month for rent and utilities; yet the rent for a 2-bedroom apartment for that person and his/her child costs \$723 a month.
- An entry-level elementary school teacher can afford a home that costs \$182,000; however, the median home price in Washington County is almost \$268,000.

The lack of affordable housing has a devastating affect on individuals and families struggling to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table, but the affects are felt by the whole community:

- High housing costs make it difficult for businesses to attract and retain workers.
- For children to succeed in school and life, they must have a stable place to do their homework and get a good night's sleep.
- Lack of affordable housing and manufactured housing park closures are eroding the quality of life for seniors and other citizens.

The Solution

Washington County is lucky to have several experienced housing developers. These groups have demonstrated expertise in leveraging private and public funds, managing properties effectively, and providing resident services. With additional resources, these developers will be able to pursue the goal of providing safe, stable homes for all of Washington County's citizens.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners has the ability to set policy, develop tools, and engage in planning processes that will encourage the development of housing for people of all income levels. They also have the ability to engage with the 12 cities in Washington County in creating positive change for Washington County's hardworking families.

HAG's Mission

The Washington County Housing Advocacy Group (HAG) is a consortium of individuals and organizations, committed to insuring that every Washington County citizen has a safe, decent place to live.

To achieve that goal, HAG coordinates advocacy efforts with policy makers at all levels of local government, works in partnership with other groups concerned with affordable housing and resident services, and provides resources to educate the public and elected officials about the need for affordable housing.



The Washington County HAG asks the Board of Commissioners to adopt the following three Affordable Housing Priorities for Washington County.

1. Make affordable housing a top concern in policy and planning decisions

Policies supportive of affordable housing create an environment conducive to housing development, leading to increased production. Immediate actions that can be taken include:

- Make affordable housing a priority in the North Bethany Planning Process: Ensure that 20% of new rental units are affordable for at least thirty years to renters at or below 60% of Median Family Income (MFI) and 20% of homes are affordable to homebuyers at or below 80% MFI. The City of Beaverton has already stated this as one of their goals for the area.
- Encourage local jurisdictions to use urban renewal and transit-oriented development funds to promote workforce housing along the new commuter rail line
- Encourage County Departments to specify resource commitments to Bridges to Housing: This collaborative effort is expected to secure 15 units of housing each year dedicated to homeless families and tied to services designed to move them out of homelessness.

2. Provide additional tools for creating housing opportunities

These tools, designed to help lower the cost of creating housing, can save an affordable housing project upwards of \$10,000 per unit on fees or \$5,000 per unit per year in taxes. Fee waivers and tax abatements will make possible projects that otherwise would not be financially viable. These tools can also help lower rents to help serve our most vulnerable citizens. The Board of Commissioners should:

- Implement fee waivers or reductions at service districts, such as Clean Water Services, and in local governments (The City of Tigard currently provides fee waivers)
- Implement property tax abatement

3. Allocate additional financial resources to housing development

Our goal is to help the Community Housing Fund, a 501(c)(3) making loans and grants to non-profit housing developers in Washington County, build a \$10 million trust fund. The Fund will help local Community Development Corporations (CDCs) build and remodel 1,000 affordable housing units in the next ten years. New resources could come from several sources, including:

- Additional local jurisdictions (beyond the City of Hillsboro, City of Beaverton, and Washington County) supporting the Community Housing Fund in their base budget;
- Allocating 25% of the County's Real Estate Transfer Tax annual proceeds to the Community Housing Fund to capitalize the revolving loan fund;
- A new Regional Affordable Housing Revolving Fund created by Metro from a special reserve of \$1,000,000 which will be used as seed money to develop a \$10,000,000 fund.

For more information about HAG or about these priorities, contact:

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