

# **Affordable Housing NOW!**

## **Affordable Housing, the Environment, and Livability**

*When a community has sufficient affordable housing, it positively impacts the local environment with cleaner air, there is less traffic, more diversity, and lower crime rates.*

The environment is not just trees and fish; it is everything that surrounds us—streets, buildings, air, water, and neighbors. In communities where affordable housing is available, both livability and the natural environment improve. Affordable housing results in a healthier environment for all living things.

### **Traffic and Pollution**

Sufficient affordable housing gives people options of where to live. When people can choose where they can live, a number of good things happen: they can be closer to work, resulting in diminished commute time, less pollution and reduced traffic congestion.

Given a choice, many people will opt for areas that have good public transportation and where they reside short distances from services and entertainment. People can even walk and bike to work or to buy groceries. Less automobile traffic contributes to reduced air pollution from exhaust and oil run-off into streams and rivers.

### **Community**

Neighborhoods with affordable housing have a higher quality of life. Diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods are far more family-friendly than communities that are economically and racially polarized<sup>1</sup>.

When neighbors are more secure in their homes they are more likely to get involved with their communities. Homeowners who must work two or three jobs often do not have the resources to participate in local issues. Renters who are not displaced regularly due to rising rents are more likely to have the time and energy to engage in their communities.

### **Crime**

Sufficient affordable housing in communities throughout the region lowers crime rates. When housing that is affordable to low income people is limited to only certain neighborhoods, the result is concentrations of poverty. Studies indicate that concentrations of poverty create increased generational

poverty and significant social disarray<sup>ii</sup>. There *is* a strong correlation between crime and major concentrations of poverty. Well-designed and well-managed affordable housing located in each community in the region prevents pockets of concentrated poverty, reduces crime, and contributes to the overall livability of the neighborhood<sup>iii</sup>.

### **Quality Design**

Nonprofit affordable housing developers are governed by boards made up of community members. They strive to ensure that the housing they build makes their community more livable, including involving neighbors in designing affordable housing. This results in housing that has a positive impact on the surrounding properties and strengthens the community.

More and more affordable housing developers are using green building technologies that are better for the environment, and often less expensive. They are exceeding requirements for protecting nearby natural resources and using native plants in landscaping.

### **Quality of Life**

People who need affordable housing are like you and me, and the people we love. By providing affordable housing choices in all communities throughout the region we create a healthier and a more livable environment.

Many people in our communities face devastatingly few options for decent, safe, affordable housing—our elders, our children, our neighbors, people who provide services to us every day, and maybe even ourselves. We need to ensure that sufficient funding is available throughout the region to build, maintain and manage high-quality affordable rental housing. It makes sense for all of us.

**Want more information about affordable housing, the community, and the environment? Call Michael Anderson at 503/335-9884, via email at [mike@cdnportland.org](mailto:mike@cdnportland.org).**

*Affordable Housing NOW! is a movement of affordable housing advocates and tenants whose goals are to secure new resources for affordable housing for the Portland Metro area by building a movement large enough to make funding for affordable housing for low income people a political priority in the Metro area. To learn more about Affordable Housing NOW!, go to:  
<http://www.cdnportland.org/ahn.html>*

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<sup>i</sup> Goetz, Edward et al. *There Goes the Neighborhood: The Impact of Subsidized, Multi-Family Housing on Urban Neighborhoods*, 1996

<sup>ii</sup> powell, john a 'Dedensifying' *Urban Neighborhoods*, November 2003.

<sup>iii</sup> Orfield, Myron. 1998. "Portland Metropolitcs: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability". Report commissioned by the Coalition for a Livable Future