

# King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force

## January 30, 2018 Community Meeting Summary

### New Holly Gathering Space, 6:30-8:30 PM

#### PARTICIPANTS

##### Task Force

- Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember
- David Baker, Mayor of Kenmore
- Rod Dembowski, King County Councilmember
- Larry Gossett, King County Councilmember
- Ken Hearing, Mayor of North Bend
- Jeanne Kohl-Welles, King County Councilmember
- Ryan McIrvin, Renton City Councilmember
- John Stokes, Bellevue City Councilmember

#### WELCOMING REMARKS

Councilmember Gossett welcomed those in attendance and established the evening's goals. Councilmember Balducci provided an overview of the Task Force's work to date and next steps. The other members of the Task Force introduced themselves.

#### KEY TAKE AWAYS

- The **homelessness** challenge is **likely larger** than the Task Force has presented, and people experiencing homelessness have **highly varied needs** to be addressed by housing strategies.
- **Displacement is breaking up longstanding communities**, particularly communities of color and low-income households. These communities **seek opportunities to own the land**, are concerned new affordable units aren't serving the specific neighborhoods being displaced.
- Even with increases in the minimum wage, **incomes aren't keeping up with rising rents and property taxes**. Many households have to choose between safe, decent housing and basic necessities.
- There is **far more demand for low-income housing units than** there is supply.
- **Seniors and people with disabilities** have specific housing needs that are not being met – we need **more accessible housing**.
- Low income households are vulnerable to **landlord mistreatment**, fear retribution and cannot afford to move.

- Government needs to make it **easier to build housing and to provide social services**.
- There are many local housing success stories, but it takes **dedication, money and cooperation** from those in power.

## PUBLIC TESTIMONY

The Task Force was able to hear testimony from 50 members of the public before the meeting concluded at 9:17 PM. A summary of topics and issues discussed in the testimony is provided by topic area, below:

- **Homelessness**
  - The **homelessness challenge is likely larger than has been presented** - more than 30,000 people received homeless services last year, one-night count was only 10,000.
  - 144 people died on the streets while experiencing homelessness last year.
  - There is a need to **address those living in cars and vans**. One solution would be to provide safe parking spaces as a bridge to more permanent housing.
  - Many people experiencing homelessness also have **disabilities**, presents additional barriers to secure housing.
- **Displacement and Equity**
  - **Communities of color** have been left out of the affordable housing industry, are also the **most vulnerable to displacement**.
  - Displacement is **breaking apart longstanding communities**, important social bonds.
  - When developers participating in programs like MHA choose to pay in to fund affordable housing development instead of building units, there is **no guarantee** that the units built with their funds will **serve the same neighborhoods displaced by the development**. Need to make sure people can **stay in their neighborhood**.
  - As one of the wealthiest places in the country, King County should be able to find ways to provide affordable housing.
  - The cost of **first and last month's rent**, along with other moving costs, is **prohibitive for low income residents** forced to move. Even when relocation fees are negotiated they often fall short of meeting the need.
  - **Mobile home parks** are a source of market rate affordable home ownership but are **vulnerable to redevelopment**. Moving a mobile home is usually not economically feasible for low income people.

- Many communities vulnerable to displacement would like the opportunity to be able to own their land on the **community land trust model**, can come together to provide the funds to get part way – how can government help communities make up the gap?
- There are underlying drivers of inequality, such as a regressive tax structure, that must also be addressed.
- **Cost of Living**
  - **Growing property taxes** are a huge burden for people with fixed incomes, including seniors.
  - With rent increases, **even \$15/hour isn't enough to afford housing**. The housing stock currently available does not align with household incomes.
  - Many families with children **must live in homes that are too small** in order to make ends meet – a one-bedroom apartment for a family of four, for example. Others must stay in homes that are unsafe because they fear retribution from landlords and cannot afford to move.
  - People must work multiple jobs to cover basic needs, parents leave children at home. Some **must choose between a decent home and paying for food** and other necessities.
  - There is a lack of affordable housing for **students**. People who grow up here cannot afford to start a career here.
  - The **ability to build wealth and assets** is not possible when you are struggling to just cover basic costs
  - Individuals are not incentivized to make more money when they will reach a point where they suddenly lose housing & other assistance but still don't make enough money to be fully self-sufficient – **less risky to just stay on assistance**, especially for families. How to empower people to build themselves up?
  - People are generally able to find jobs now, but not necessarily jobs that pay a **living wage**. Young adults are forced to stay home, do not develop the skills to thrive.
  - Just because a household only pays 30% of their income for housing, it is **not a guarantee that they will be left with enough to live on**.
  - Some landlords are changing the rules midstream – one person gave testimony about being told that she now had to make 3x the rent instead of 1.5x, when she was an existing resident. No longer met the standard, had to move out.
  - **People with disabilities** are not provided enough money to live on, and not provided sufficient housing opportunities.

- **Demand**
  - El Centro de la Raza received more than **1,000 applications for 200 units** on the first day they began accepting applications.
  - **Section 8** voucher holders struggle to find a unit that will accept their voucher.
  - We **do not have enough housing inventory** currently on the market to meet demand.
  - We need to consider all the people **currently living outside of King County who commute in to work**, find more balance.
  - **Seniors** are having a hard time finding affordable units, **especially for those who can't drive**. Public transportation is a challenge for seniors in rural areas.
- **Fair Housing**
  - Undocumented residents are **afraid to speak up** against landlords' violations.
  - We need **more accessible housing**. Accessible units are a small subset of the already limited housing stock, so people with disabilities will have an even more difficult time to find an affordable unit.
  - Lack of housing supply means people are putting up with landlord neglect – **"keep quiet or get evicted"**.
- **Funding**
  - Affordable housing developers **need more funding** to meet demand.
  - Many specialized programs to help people in domestic violence situations, etc – would be good to have **more generalized resources** as well to keep families together.
  - We need more vouchers, more low-income housing.
- **Community and Social Service Organizations**
  - The **unincorporated community** needs more assistance from King County.
  - Strong support for encouraging local communities to purchase land and build housing themselves under the **community land trust model**.
  - Social service organizations have become more and more occupied with helping people find housing, helping people with neglectful landlords.
- **Regulatory**
  - Per GMA, housing must be affordable to **all economic segments** and provide a **variety of housing types and densities**. We're not meeting that standard.
  - Our **permitting** process is too slow.
  - Process of getting social security, other types of assistance can take a long time. People may need **extra assistance to**

**navigate** the process, especially those experiencing homelessness, those with disabilities.

- **Local Success Stories and Opportunities**

- LIHI is developing tiny house villages as transitional housing.
- **El Centro de la Raza's** affordable housing development was successful because many local stakeholders saw **something they could benefit from** – new business, public spaces and amenities.
- There is growing leadership around affordable housing growing out of the **Native American community**. **Chief Seattle Club** is breaking ground on new <30% AMI units in Pioneer Square.
- There are great success stories where residents come together to find resources and political will to save affordable housing from redevelopment, but the **process is complicated and expensive, requires thinking outside the box**.
- Skyway property investor has two large parcels, wants to build affordable housing, **but lacks right of way access and hasn't had cooperation** from local government to make it work.