

# Regional Affordable Housing Task Force Meeting

March 29, 2018

New Holly Gathering Space, 2:00-4:00 PM

## PARTICIPANTS

### Task Force

- Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember (Co-Chair)
- Rod Dembowski, King County Councilmember
- Ken Hearing, Mayor, City of North Bend
- Jeanne Kohl-Welles, King County Councilmember
- Ryan McIrvin, Renton City Councilmember
- John Stokes, Bellevue City Councilmember

### Standing Advisory Panel (SAP)

- Hamdi Abdulle, Somali Youth and Family Club
- Patricia Akiyama, Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties
- Colleen Echohawk, Chief Seattle Club
- Merf Ehman, Columbia Legal Services
- Mark Gropper, Renton Housing Authority
- Marty Kooistra, Housing Development Consortium
- M.A. Leonard, Enterprise Community Partners
- Andrew Lofton, Seattle Housing Authority
- Tony To, HomeSight
- Brett Waller, Washington Multifamily Housing Association
- Dan Watson, King County Housing Authority
- Bryce Yadon, Futurewise

### Welcome

- Councilmember Claudia Balducci called the meeting to order.

### Task Force Housekeeping

- [Colleen Echohawk](#), Executive Director of the Chief Seattle Club and founder of the Coalition to End Urban Native Homelessness, was introduced as a proposed new Standing Advisory Panel member. As there was not a quorum of the Task Force present, a vote on her appointment will take place at the next meeting.

## Statement of Intent

The [draft Statement of Intent](#) was presented to the group, to be adopted at the April meeting. The following revisions were requested:

- Include the goal of developing affordable housing near jobs and transit
- Address “adequate housing” along with affordability (for example, the size of housing should match the size of households)
- Reference the goal of affordability for 80% Area Median Income (AMI) and below
- Clarify that the goal should be stated in terms of **net new** units, to address the loss of currently affordable units
- Better define the term “special needs”
- Mention the impacts on health and safety before economic vitality
- Emphasize neighborhood stability and making it possible to age in place.

## Strategies to Address Place-Based Displacement

**Ben Bakkenta, Senior Program Manager, Puget Sound Regional Council** (PSRC) provided [an overview of PSRC’s Growing Transit Communities \(GTC\) work](#). GTC is focused on encouraging equitable development around current and future transit stations. The ultimate goal is to encourage development and density in station areas while protecting affordability and mitigating displacement for those earning 80% or less AMI.

PSRC started by exploring and understanding the people living near 74 current or planned transit stations in terms of housing markets, demographics, access to opportunity and displacement risk. Depending on these characteristics, PSRC sorted station areas into eight categories, and identified specific strategies and tools for each category.

Today, only half the station areas have some type of subarea plan and of those, fewer than half have significant amounts of mixed use or multifamily zoning. Only 18 cities have adopted additional housing affordability programs.

**Ubox Gardheere, Equity Strategies Manager, City of Seattle** explained the [City of Seattle’s Equitable Development Initiative](#), which is a place-based tool meant to help communities respond to the pressure of population growth and the increasing risk of displacement that results. Equitable development takes place when life outcomes are experienced equally by the people currently living in a neighborhood, as well as those moving in. Strategies address two major obstacles to equity: involuntary economic and cultural displacement for communities of color and inequitable access to key opportunities for well-being for communities of color. The Equitable Development approach integrates people and place and shift the focus away from institutions.

Seattle's Equitable Development Initiative has three components:

- An Equity Analysis as a companion to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to inform the City's growth strategy
- Race and Social Equity goals and policies in the City's Comprehensive Plan
- An Equitable Development Implementation Plan

The City has invested in five project areas so far and will add more in coming funding rounds. The program is funded by one-time funds from the sale of the City Plaza and a Community Development Block Grant, with ongoing support from a tax on AirBNB rentals.

**Dan Watson, Deputy Executive Director, King County Housing Authority,** provided [an overview of preservation](#) as a means of preventing displacement. Redevelopment or "re-positioning" property to enhance value, which often causes rent increases or displacement, is usually enabled by underlying zoning that allows for greater density than the current use for a property. Mobile homes are a good example of how zoning and use can be disconnected, making a property attractive to developers.

Nonprofit housing providers often focus on new construction, but a preservation strategy to prevent displacement is also important. Preservation is often more affordable than new construction, but is a challenge with traditional funding sources due to compressed timing. It also requires strong expertise in acquiring commercial properties. Preservation is a slow, gradual method increase the stock of affordable housing, and should be considered a long term strategy as opposed to immediate relief. Mr. Watson also emphasized the importance of HUD's subsidies and how even very small changes in funding allocations can be catastrophic to the system.

**Frank Chopp, Speaker of the State House,** [offered overview of recent legislative successes](#) for affordable housing at the State level, particularly the new law that makes public lands available for free for affordable housing when they are surplus. Sound Transit, for example, is required to make surplus property and air rights available for affordable housing. He encouraged the Task Force to view the State as a partner in affordable housing. He also stressed the need to think beyond the typical way of doing things and find creative ways to include affordable housing in public development.

## Strategies to Address People-Based Displacement

**Merf Ehman, Executive Director, Columbia Legal Services** discussed [common housing challenges tenants face and useful tools to combat those challenges](#). She highlighted several laws passed in the 2018 session: an expanded Document Recording fee for affordable housing, expanded Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) program, and outlawing source of income discrimination. Ms. Ehman also identified

some areas of State law that she would like to see changed, including the 20 day notice for eviction. Twenty days is often not enough time to find a new home and results in homelessness, especially for seniors. She also identified underutilized tools, such as a law that allows tenants to pay back rent late to avoid eviction, fair tenant screening laws. She cited the need to establish a State or County agency to enforce landlord-tenant laws, and supports a countywide law banning landlords from rejecting tenants based on criminal records. She called out Seattle for laws she thinks benefit tenants, including the requirement to take the first eligible applicant for a rental property (which was ruled illegal by the Superior Court the day prior), just cause eviction rules, tenant relocation assistance, and the prohibition for using a criminal justice history as a disqualifier for rental.

**Kathleen Hosfeld, Executive Director, Homestead Community Land Trust** discussed [how home ownership can serve as an anti-displacement tool](#) and a means to grow wealth. When a household owns a home and can afford the mortgage, displacement is less likely and income diversity in neighborhoods is more possible. Today, there are few homes priced to be affordable for moderate income people earning 50% to 80% AMI. National investors have scooped up most entry-level homes in the area and turned them into rentals for investment income. While the need is more intense households under 50% AMI, there are few resources to promote moderate income households and many are in need. Ms. Hosfeld recommends emphasizing permanent affordability, making funding proportionate to the need, targeting 100 affordable homes for purchase per year countywide, promoting best practices in zoning, and technical assistance for cities to use State resources.

**Mark Gropper, Executive Director, Renton Housing Authority** provided an overview of the [City of Renton's work on tenant protections](#). In 2016, several large apartment buildings started rejecting voucher holders and then evicting existing residents with vouchers. As a result, the City enacted a source of income ordinance. This was paired with a public information campaign to show what types of impacts were taking place. With these types of protections, it's important that the landlords still see value from participating in the Section 8 program.

In 2017, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Fair Market Rents (FMRs) were set far below market rates, so the Renton Housing Authority signed a protest letter along with other housing authorities. Based on a rent study, HUD agreed to raise FMRs to a level that makes the program viable. Even with the adjustment, many voucher holders still pay well more than 30% of their income toward housing.

## Recap, Discussion

Task Force and SAP discussion included the following topics or questions:

- Transit investments appear to have created a great deal of risk of displacement and the region will need to grapple with how to avoid displacement and preserve

communities before costs escalate. Planner should look long-term at how the transit system will build out to address displacement before it occurs. There is urgency to this work because the planning is happening now.

- The budget for Section 8 vouchers is tied to Federal Housing and Urban Development appropriations and there is no way to increase the number of vouchers without a rise in federal appropriations. It would be useful to hear from people who use or want to use Section 8 vouchers.

## Closing and Next Steps

- Councilmember Balducci adjourned the meeting at 4:01.