



SOUTH SOUND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY PARTNERS

Shaping Pierce County's Future by Creating Access to Affordable and Attainable Housing

Members of the Pierce County Legislative Delegation
Washington State Legislature
416 Sid Snyder Avenue
Olympia, WA 98504

January 13, 2022

Dear Honorable Legislators,

We write to you as a coalition of 14 Pierce County governments, large and small, who have come together this year to create a formal collaborative structure to create or preserve more affordable housing in Pierce County. The following represents our request for legislative support. In the past year, the South Sound region experienced a rapid rise in housing costs, continuing a trend that has developed over the course of the past five years. Housing affordability and stability issues are now exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency and associated impacts on the local, state and national economy. To that end, our requests of the Legislature reflect our ongoing concerns about housing supply and attainability in addition to unique housing considerations related to the coronavirus pandemic.

The South Sound Housing Affordability Partners (SSHA³P) respectfully request the Legislature act on the following issues. Each of these is not a silver bullet solution to solving our region's housing challenges, but are helpful tools to make incremental progress in solving this growing problem:

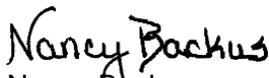
- Provide funding for comprehensive plan updates that increase opportunities for affordable housing development and preservation, counter displacement, and support local implementation of past legislation like HB 1220, which updates the Growth Management Act housing element to require that local governments plan for and accommodate the availability of affordable housing.
- Support funding and policy decisions that reflect the role of affordable homeownership in ensuring intergenerational wealth building for individuals and families affected by racial and ethnic segregation, marginalization, and discrimination.
- Increase existing funding sources for affordable housing development like the State Housing Trust Fund, create new tools/resources for local governments, including authorizing new, progressive sources that do not disproportionately burden low-income households.
- Reform SEPA to streamline review of infill developments—building within existing urban areas—that are consistent with a jurisdiction's adopted Growth Management Act comprehensive plan and development regulations. This reform would help local communities facilitate more housing choices of all types for current residents, newcomers, and future generations. The change would

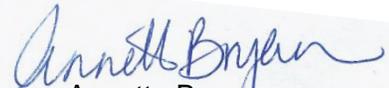
also help to free up local resources and staff time to address permit backlogs and shorten review timelines.

- Continue prioritizing resources and policies that limit evictions during the transition from the pandemic protections. Resources should create a balanced approach that protects both tenants and landlords and recognizes the vulnerability with the ongoing pandemic.
- Create tools for local governments to fund land acquisition around transit centers for housing that is affordable to a range of income levels and community development projects. This could include housing benefit districts or other tools to facilitate land acquisition and station planning.

While the county, cities, towns, and tribes in our region all have unique needs and circumstances, we are united in our desire to see individuals and families being able to remain in their homes, and for more available housing options for our friends and neighbors with low- and fixed-incomes. During this public health emergency, we are keenly aware of the disparate impacts on the most vulnerable in our communities, including seniors, the unhoused, people of color, veterans, and working families. We are continuing to explore and work toward actions that can be taken at the local level to foster greater housing stability in Pierce County. We thank you for your consideration of our requests and hope you will consider us partners in your policy making decisions heading into the 2021 legislative session.

Yours in service,

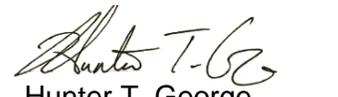

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