



South Sound Housing Affordability Partners

January 10, 2020

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

Dear Legislators,

Across Pierce County, we have reached a critical moment. Our cities are in the midst of a housing affordability crisis, and it is our obligation to solve it.

In 2019, Pierce County made headlines for having some of the fastest rising rents in the nation, yet wages remain stagnant. In the last five years, rents in Pierce County increased by 50% while household income increased by just 4%. Across Greater Pierce County, more than 60% of home-owning households and almost 40% of renters now spend a disproportionately high percentage of their income on housing costs. If this trend continues uninterrupted, the cost of housing in our community will become a burden that few of our hardworking neighbors will be able to afford. We need your help to make sure this does not happen in Pierce County.

While many cities are making individual contributions aimed at keeping housing obtainable for all residents, true progress relies on leaders working together to share bold ideas and discuss and create innovative regional solutions. Ensuring available housing options for all who live or work in Pierce County is an opportunity to increase household resilience, consumer spending power, and economic strength across the region. In particular, working families, seniors, and first-time homebuyers stand to benefit most from collaborative efforts on housing. Over the last year, a bipartisan group of elected leaders from across Pierce County have gathered to discuss how we can do just that by forming the ***South Sound Housing Affordability Partners (SSHAP)***.

In this moment, we have a unique opportunity: we can join together to disrupt these trends we are seeing now across the region and ensure housing remains affordable at all income levels in Pierce County. While we are working in 2020 to formalize a coalition of governments across Pierce County, the level of collaboration needed to address this pressing issue also includes you. We are writing to ask you to keep obtainable housing at the forefront of your work this


"Shaping the Future of Housing Affordability in Our Pierce County"


session and to express the following:


- We strongly support state legislation that will increase investment in affordable housing by enabling robust and flexible local funding options and dedicating revenue to the State Housing Trust Fund;
- We strongly support more equitable allocations of State Housing Trust Fund dollars across Urban Growth Areas demonstrating a need to increase jobs/housing balance; and
- We are willing to help you hone statewide solutions – As a group of collaborative leaders seeking innovative tools that increase jobs/housing balance, we welcome pilot programs that could be deployed across Pierce County to determine their ability to keep housing obtainable for all.


While each jurisdiction has its own unique needs and circumstances and while we acknowledge that the focus on housing needs to be an enduring one, we also need to act now to ensure that vulnerable residents, such as seniors, veterans, and working families, remain housed and make housing obtainable for all Pierce County residents. We hope you will join us in this effort.


Sincerely,



Nancy Backus
Mayor
City of Auburn



Pat Johnson
Mayor
City of Buckley



Ronald Frederick
Mayor
City of DuPont


Daryl Eidinger
Mayor
City of Edgewood


Kim Roscoe
Mayor
City of Fife


Hunter George
Mayor
City of Fircrest


Kit Kuhn
Mayor
City of Gig Harbor


Don Anderson
Mayor
City of Lakewood


Josh Penner
Mayor
City of Orting



John Palmer
Deputy Mayor
City of Puyallup



Douglas Richardson
Chair
Pierce County



David Z. Bean
Chairman
Puyallup Tribe of Indians



Ron Lucas
Mayor
City of Steilacoom



Bill Pugh
Mayor
City of Sumner

SSHAP CONVENER:



Victoria R. Woodards
Mayor
City of Tacoma



Bruce Dammeier
County Executive
Pierce County



Connie Ladenburg
Human Services Committee Chair
Pierce County Council