

PUTTING HOUSING FRONT & CENTER: A COMMUNITY CALL TO ACTION

Before the pandemic, housing prices in Jefferson County were already the third least affordable in the entire state of Washington. This disproportionately affects our essential workers, many of whom earn less than the county's average annual wage of \$39,532 and far less than the state's average annual wage of \$66,156. For housing to be considered "affordable," the rent/mortgage and utilities must be within 30% of the person's gross income, meaning the average worker should spend no more than \$988 on housing costs. In contrast, most rentals are between \$1,000-\$2,000 (often not including utilities).

It's gotten worse in the last 4 months. An influx of newly remote workers and retirees is rapidly driving up prices, putting the stability of our existing workforce even more at risk. While we welcome the new energy and talent that newcomers bring, we need to be aware of the increasing challenges for local workers.

Now more than ever, **affordable housing is key to our health and economic recovery and must be central to any rebuilding strategy.** The strength and future of our community, the health of our families, and the vitality of our local businesses are at stake.

"We are experiencing a huge influx of people fleeing the cities, and I fear that it's going to be a permanent change to our community that nobody can stop or mitigate. It may completely destroy the fleeting chance of affordability in housing here."

- Real Estate Professional

EVERY RESIDENT CAN TAKE IMMEDIATE & CLEAR ACTION

WE CALL ON INDIVIDUALS TO:

- Rent space to essential workers at long term, affordable rates (e.g., rent a room or ADU, convert an Airbnb to permanent rental, add a rental unit, etc.)
- Support local housing organizations through donations of time, money, or resources
- Participate in City Council and County Commissioner meetings when housing is on the agenda
- Open a conversation with neighbors and friends about the potential impact of losing essential workers from our community (e.g., farm workers, grocery clerks, teachers, healthcare workers, etc.)
- Consider legacy options for your property; sell to your renter or leave it to a housing organization in your will

WE CALL ON BUSINESSES AND NONPROFITS TO:

- Take an active role in helping your employees understand and take advantage of options to secure a long-term affordable living situation
- Commit a portion of your profits to an affordable housing organization or fund
- Actively advocate for affordable workforce housing to local government and business leaders
- Share this declaration with your clients, customers and networks and encourage their engagement as advocates for housing

WE CALL ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO:

- Seek out and leverage local, state and national funding sources to drive added dollars into prioritized local affordable housing production
- Create higher density options in Port Townsend, including policies that allow for tiny home communities
- Regulate vacation rentals and Airbnbs in the County
- Simplify the process and reduce the cost of building and rehabilitating affordable housing (e.g., adopt more policies to reduce permitting fees and time for low-income home builders and affordable housing developers)
- Develop a set of pre-approved ADU plans to promote small-unit development
- Review existing public lands that could be put to use for permanently affordable housing and actively identify local partners to develop it

"Since COVID, I haven't seen a rental below \$2000/month. My required monthly income would need to be \$6000/month before my 'preliminary' application would even be accepted. I've regularly seen 20 people vying for the same rental when it's been on the market for 1 day. I'm feeling pretty desperate."

- Renter

**EVERY PERSON CAN DO SOMETHING
TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

HOW WILL YOU COMMIT TO BEING A PART OF THE SOLUTION?

SIGN YOUR NAME TO STAND WITH US AT:
HOUSINGSOLUTIONSNETWORK.ORG/SIGN



THIS CALL TO ACTION IS ENDORSED BY THE FOLLOWING HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS:

