

City of Tacoma Affordable Housing Action Strategy Update



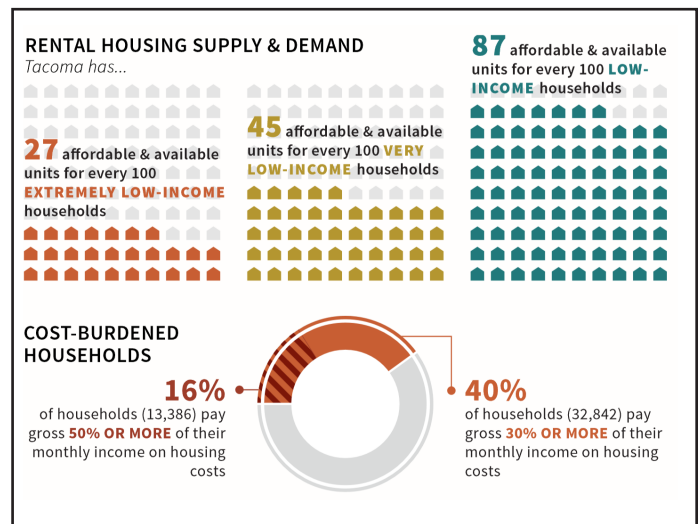
Initiative Highlights: Sept 2020

Prior to COVID-19, nearly 33,000 households (40% of households) in Tacoma were housing cost burdened (pay at least 30 percent of their income on housing costs each month), reducing their ability to pay for other necessities. We know that the economic crisis caused by COVID-19 has only made the housing crisis worse.

To address affordable housing, the AHAS charts out four objectives:

1. Create more units of affordable housing;
2. Preserve more units of affordable housing;
3. Help more households be able to afford their housing; and
4. Reduce barriers for households who often experience them.

This document provides an update on how we are addressing this crisis through the Affordable Housing Action Strategy.



UPDATE ON OBJECTIVE 1: CREATING MORE UNITS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

UPDATE THE MULTIFAMILY TAX EXEMPTION PROGRAM TO INCREASE ITS IMPACT. (ACTION 1.3)

- AHAS summary: Encourage construction, rehabilitation, or conversion of existing structures, the City of Tacoma offers a property tax exemption to developers who build multifamily housing within the city.
- Status: Working with Long Range Planning on At Home in Tacoma to explore opportunities for expanding use of MFTE.

LEVERAGE PUBLICLY AND PARTNER-OWNED LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING. (ACTION 1.4)

- AHAS summary: Establish a comprehensive land disposition policy for publicly owned land, including creating a priority for affordable housing development
- Status: Currently working to surplus several in-City TPU properties for potential RFP. Properties currently out to City Departments to determine if there is a City need for retention. Finalizing proposed Notice to the Puyallup Tribe. RFP release estimated for January, 2021.

ENCOURAGE MORE DIVERSE TYPES OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RELAXED LAND USE STANDARDS, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVES. (ACTION 1.8)

MODIFY INCLUSIONARY HOUSING PROVISIONS TO TARGET UNMENT NEED AND ALIGN WITH MARKET REALITY (ACTION 1.2)

- AHAS summary: Build a wider range of housing options to support broader affordability within the city, especially smaller scale options.
- Status: Home In Tacoma project in planning phase. This project brings together two of the big actions from AHAS (1.2 and 1.8), and final deliverables will be packaged as a study and high level policy direction for Council, along with near-term and long-term implementation opportunities. Engagement and policy development to begin in September.

ESTABLISH A DEDICATED SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR THE TACOMA AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUND. (ACTION 1.9)

- AHAS summary: Establish a long-term, dedicated source of funding for the Tacoma Housing Trust Fund through voter-approved sources.
- Status: The City released its Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for new construction, rehabilitation or preservation of affordable housing units. The NOFA was issued on August 6, and closes on September 17, 2020. The primary objective of the available funding is to expand opportunities for safe, healthy and affordable housing for low-income individuals and households. Funding exceeds \$2.3 M, through a mix of Federal Sources (HOME, CDBG) and the City's Affordable Housing Fund (\$640,000).

EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASED STAFF SUPPORT DURING THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS. (ACTION 1.12)

- AHAS summary: Shorten/streamline the development review timeline.
- Status: The City is piloting an expedited review process on the latest Mercy Housing project and they are on track to have permits issued in-time per their agreement.

UPDATE ON OBJECTIVE 2: PRESERVING MORE UNITS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

TARGET EXISTING RESOURCES TO IMPROVE THE LIVABILITY OF EXISTING OWNER-OCCUPIED HOMES. (ACTION 2.3)

- AHAS summary: Help homeowners in need and coordinate code compliance and TPU assistance programs.
- Status: The Housing Division's Single Family Rehab program has completed 19 single family rehabilitations during the 2019-20 PY. 75% of these projects have energy conservation component with TPU.

IMPROVE TRACKING AND MONITORING OF EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPERTIES. (ACTION 2.4)

- AHAS summary: Create a system to track properties at-risk of losing their affordability, due to expiring subsidies, opting out of local programs like the Multifamily Tax Exemption Program, or higher rents.
- Status: Continuing tracking tool pilot and concurrently analyzing needs across department to devise a range of opportunities (high and low resources) to improve monitoring.

UPDATE ON OBJECTIVES 3 AND 4: HELPING MORE HOUSEHOLDS AFFORD AND ATTAIN HOUSING

EXPAND TENANTS' PROTECTIONS THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY. (ACTION 3.1)

- AHAS summary: Establish a comprehensive and permanent tenant protection policy
- Status: In February, we completed our survey of landlords and tenants on the implementation of the City's Rental Housing Code. Currently, we are planning landlord and tenant listening posts in October with the intent of evaluating areas of improvement in the City's Rental Housing Code.

CREATE A RANGE OF RESOURCES FOR HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCING A CRISIS. (ACTION 3.2)

- AHAS summary: Create a range of resources for those experiencing a housing crisis.
- Status: Through 2019, the City served approximately 1,500 individuals through financial assistance. From January 2019 through February 2020, Tacoma Public Utilities provided utility assistance to 9,144 households.
- Due to the pandemic, work shifted to the newly created Rental Assistance Program (as of 8/26/20: 324 payments made, totaling \$278,625) and TPU's Emergency Assistance Response (as of 8/25/20: 10,640 applications approved, \$1.9 M spent).

STREAMLINE PROCESSES FOR HOUSEHOLDS APPLYING FOR AND USING RENTAL ASSISTANCE. (ACTION 4.1)

- AHAS summary: Streamline process for people applying and using rental assistance, especially systemic barriers to persons with limited literacy and English proficiency.
- Status: The City has worked to streamline the process by sharing income verification with TPU and is now working with partners on sharing and streamlining assistance systems through the Rental Assistance Program and Emergency Assistance Response.