



**CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST (CCR)**

TO: Mayor & City Council

FROM: Council Member Lauren Walker and Council Assistant Rebecca Boydston

COPIES TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager; Mark Lauzier, Assistant City Manager; Bill Fosbre, City Attorney; Executive Leadership Team; File

SUBJECT: Council Contingency Fund Request-Tacoma Housing Authority landlord incentives

DATE: September 12, 2017

ITEM/ISSUE PROPOSED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION:

I ask for your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda at the earliest available meeting of the Study Session:

I respectfully ask for City Council concurrence to direct the City Manager to allocate funding in the amount of \$50,000.00 from the City Council Contingency Fund, to support Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) in creating a pilot project for providing incentives for landlords who take Section 8 renters.

BRIEF BACKGROUND:

As part of the homeless health emergency declaration and increased cost of living in the Tacoma area, we have been examining strategies to encourage affordable housing, including incentives for landlords to take Section 8 tenants.

According to THA, as many as 40% of new voucher recipients in 2016 had to turn their vouchers back in because they had been unable to secure housing in the time allotted. That percentage was 22% in 2017. The change in percent is not because housing is more available, but because THA is giving families more time to look for housing and it is sometimes taking over four months for new voucher holders to secure housing.

THA's suggestions are to establish the following incentives:

1. A signing bonus for landlords who make units available to Section 8 tenants.

This would be a one-time cash incentive for landlords who make units that have not previously been available to Section 8 tenants available to Section 8 tenants. Far too many individuals who have waited years for vouchers to become available are being forced to turn them back in because they cannot find landlords who will take them. Oakland and San Diego have established such incentives.

2. A landlord damage fund

This fund would act as an insurance policy for landlords if their properties were to become damaged by Section 8 tenants. The fund would likely only provide reimbursements for amounts in excess of the tenant's security deposit and any insurance payments, as well as include a cap on what that amount could be. Seattle has established such a fund, and it has rarely been used. We believe such a fund would create security for landlords, while dispelling the myth that Section 8 tenants are more likely to cause damage.

3. Create a fund so assist tenants with screening fees and security deposits

Screening fees and security deposits are an ongoing barrier for low-income households. Access to these types of funds will make Section 8 households more competitive in the rental market.

4. Request City staff examine the feasibility of adding source of income as a protected class over the next year

This would ask the City's Office of Equity and Human Rights, along with the Human Rights Commission, to look at the feasibility of making it illegal for landlords to discriminate on the basis of where tenants get their income. Some landlords refuse to rent to Section 8 voucher holders, and often these holders are forced to turn their vouchers back in when they are unable to use them. Adding source of income as a protected class would end the practice of landlords refusing to rent to individuals using Section 8 vouchers, Social Security, or other income sources. Implementing this policy would take an extensive outreach and education campaign, as well as community engagement, so we would request OEHR begin laying out a timeline for implementation to be presented the Community, Vitality, and Safety Committee next year.

This \$50,000 one-time contribution would allow Tacoma Housing Authority to design these new programs with its landlords and implement the incentive programs above as a pilot project. The fund's administration and distribution would be entirely administered by THA.

FUNDING REQUESTED:

***Please provide the Council Contingency Fund Biennial Budget Document if this request is for the use of this fund.**


In you have a question related to the Council Consideration Request, please contact Rebecca Boydston at 253-591-5164 or rboydston@cityoftacoma.org

SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY:


Council Member

SUPPORTING COUNCILMEMBERS SIGNATURES (2 SIGNATURES ONLY)

(Signatures demonstrate support to initiate discussion and consideration of the subject matter by City Council for potential policy development and staff guidance/direction.)

1. 

POS # 4

2. 

POS# 3