



# **SOUTH SOUND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY PARTNERS**

**Shaping the Future of Housing Opportunities in Our Pierce County**

In recent months, Pierce County has 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%. If this trend continues uninterrupted, the cost of housing in our community will become a burden that many of our hardworking neighbors will no longer be able to afford.

Across Greater Pierce County, more than 60% of home-owning households and almost 40% of renters spend a disproportionately high percentage of their income on housing costs. Households in all jurisdictions and all income ranges (including those making more than \$70,000 per year) are impacted by the high cost of housing.

Many cities, counties, and tribes have made individual contributions aimed at keeping housing attainable 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.

## **PIERCE COUNTY MAYORAL ROUNDTABLE ON AFFORDABILITY**

Recognizing the magnitude of housing issues across the region, Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards, County Executive Bruce Dammeier, and County Councilmember Connie Ladenburg invited elected leaders from across Pierce County to learn more about the local housing market and its impacts, including the Mayors of each city and town and leaders from the Puyallup Tribe. The group also chose to explore whether there were opportunities to partner in making a difference.

From the beginning, discussions focused on shared interests as well as the unique needs of each jurisdiction. Together, these leaders committed to a four-meeting series in 2019.

### **Meeting series highlights:**

- Participating leaders and UWT's Dr. Ali Modarres shared changes in the housing market and the impacts to our seniors, young people, and working families as well as our economy and transportation systems;
- A panel of private and non-profit housing developers shared how to effectively incentivize the creation of obtainable housing;
- Representatives from local government coalitions shared how collaboration has strengthened their ability to create accessible housing at all income levels; and
- The series culminated with a discussion of how governments across Pierce County might partner on this important issue.



# SSHAP

## **Overall, participating elected leaders indicated an interest to do the following:**

**ACT NOW:** Decide on collaborative actions they could take now to help vulnerable residents such as seniors remain housed and make housing obtainable for all Pierce County residents; and

**PARTNER IN SUSTAINING THIS WORK:** Explore forming an enduring coalition that could assist member governments in making needed progress on this vital issue for years to come while honoring the unique needs and circumstances of each jurisdiction.

## **ACT NOW: IMMEDIATE COLLABORATIVE ACTION**

The following work will be the focus of the first quarter of 2020:

- Beginning coordinated lobbying and monitoring of State Legislation;
- Compiling a centralized library of relevant housing policies and best practices;
- Creating a countywide inventory of Urban Growth Area land available for housing; and
- Compiling a list of all funding sources for housing, including the allowed uses and restrictions.

## **PATHWAY TO AN ENDURING, MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIP**

Embracing the belief that our governments are stronger when they work together and this work cannot successfully be completed by one agency nor under one elected official's term, ten local governments across Pierce County have committed to funding and engaging with a contractor to explore the structure and formation of a coalition to have a sustaining presence in this work. **This coalition is currently known as the South Sound Housing Affordability Partners (SSHAP, pronounced "Shape").**

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Over the course of 2020 with consultant support, participating governments will increase their long-term, collective impacts on housing by taking the following steps:

- Brief government Councils
- Confirm initial SSHAP participants;
- Determine the coalition's structure and define desired outcomes;
- Craft an interlocal agreement for circulation; and
- Develop a workplan that defines the timing and sequence of SSHAP's launch and next steps.

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In alignment with the direction from the very first Mayoral Roundtable meetings, this coalition will create a sustainable pathway to greater housing opportunity in Pierce County while honoring each jurisdiction's individual community needs and circumstances.