



City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

ChrisTiana ObeySumner & Jessica Westgren, Co-Chairs

March 8, 2019

Seattle Office of Housing,

Re: Seattle should build affordable housing at Fort Lawton as quickly as possible.

The Seattle Renters' Commission urges the City to move forward with the plan to build 238 units of affordable housing at Fort Lawton as quickly as possible.

Affordability is the single largest issue that renters in Seattle face today. As the city gets more expensive, renters are forced to either give a greater share of each paycheck to rent or leave the city. Entire communities are wiped out by displacement. Working people struggle to pay rent every month. Thousands of our neighbors sleep on the streets.

We need to build as much affordable housing as possible so that all renters can live in the city we love. The Fort Lawton development is an excellent opportunity for the City to build 238 affordable units, including 86 units for homeless seniors, 100 affordable units for those making 60% of area median income (AMI), and 52 affordable homeownership opportunities. The housing will also be next to Discovery Park, which provides much-needed proximity to green space usually reserved for wealthy homeowners.

However, we need to do more. It has been over 10 years since Fort Lawton was first declared "surplus land" and will likely be another 2 years before the affordable housing gets built. Within the time we've been talking about Fort Lawton, average rent in the city has risen over 60%. We welcome every unit of affordable housing at Fort Lawton, but we need to do better.

We should complete the 238 units of affordable housing at Fort Lawton as quickly as possible. When the next Fort Lawton-like opportunity arises, we should build more affordable housing, faster. We should widen the AMI requirement so our affordable housing includes our neighbors both higher and lower than 60% AMI. And the City should raise more revenue for affordable housing to fund the backlog of shovel-ready projects currently available to affordable housing developers.

The affordability crisis Seattle renters face must be addressed with utmost urgency.

Thank you for your consideration,

The Seattle Renters' Commission

Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 600 4th Ave, 4th Floor; PO Box 94649 Seattle, WA 98124-4649
Maureen Sheehan, Staff Liaison: (206) 684-0302 or Maureen.Sheehan@seattle.gov
seattle.gov/neighborhoods/seattle-renters-commission



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Cc: Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor of Seattle
Council President Bruce A Harrell
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Councilmember Lisa Herbold
Councilmember Rob Johnson
Councilmember Debora Juarez
Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda
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Councilmember Kshama Sawant
Andres Mantilla, Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods