



City of Seattle

Office of the Mayor
City of Seattle
Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

Executive Order 2017-12: Seattle Rental Housing Assistance Program and Affordability Portal

An Executive Order directing that a coordinated interdepartmental effort urgently address the severe housing costs of households with incomes between 30% and 50% of area median income (AMI) through development and implementation of a pilot rental housing assistance program to increase housing stability, facilitating faster placements in affordable units for SHA voucher holders and households on the SHA waitlist, and creating an affordability portal to improve access to city benefits.

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has asserted that households are housing cost burdened if more than 30% of their income is devoted to rent and utilities; and

WHEREAS, recent analysis has found that 47% of households that rent in the Seattle metro area spend more than 30% of their income on rent;¹ and

WHEREAS, 2014 analysis conducted for the Seattle Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) committee found that approximately 10,000 households (renters and owners) earning between 30-50% of AMI are spending more than half of their income on housing costs and are considered severely housing cost burdened; and

WHEREAS, the HALA analysis also found that communities of color are more likely to be severely financially burdened due to housing costs than their white counterparts; and

WHEREAS, severe housing cost burden has been found to be associated with increased residential mobility which has detrimental effects on educational attainment and material hardships such as food insecurity, a lack of health insurance, and overcrowded living situations;² and

¹ Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies tabulations of US Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey data.

² <http://paa2005.princeton.edu/papers/50752>;
http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/partnership_for_americas_economic_success/paeshousingreportfinal1pdf.pdf

WHEREAS, rents have increased 57% in the last six years alone in the City of Seattle; and

WHEREAS, 3,500 individuals and families were selected via lottery from a pool of nearly 22,000 applicants in 2017 for the Seattle Housing Authorities (SHA) Housing Choice Voucher waitlist; and

WHEREAS, households with incomes below 30% of AMI or those experiencing homelessness are eligible for preferential status on the SHA waitlist; and

WHEREAS, there are 149 households on the SHA waitlist with incomes between 30% and 50% AMI that reside in Seattle that are deprioritized in the distribution of Housing Choice Vouchers and will likely not receive a voucher for several years; and

WHEREAS, data shows that affordability of a household's basic needs is interconnected, that people make tradeoffs between food, housing, healthcare and other basic needs when faced with financial constraints; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle provides benefits such as the Utility Discount Program, the Vehicle License Fee Rebate Program, the Child Care Assistance Program and Fresh Bucks to help low-income households reduce the costs of basic needs; and

WHEREAS, an effective approach to Seattle's affordable housing crisis will require multiple strategies to address income inequality and through production of new and preservation of existing affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, the City is committed to the Race and Social Justice initiative and will apply a racial equity lens to work on increasing access to affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle's Multifamily Tax Exemption program (MFTE) creates affordable apartments by offering a tax exemption to new multifamily buildings in exchange for setting aside 20-25% of the homes as income- and rent-restricted; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Housing has launched an affirmative marketing policy for new properties participating in the MFTE program, which requires property owners to proactively market MFTE affordable units to the Seattle Housing Authority and community based organizations to help households who are otherwise unlikely to apply for this housing to know about the vacancies and have the opportunity to rent the MFTE units;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor of Seattle, hereby order:

Section 1. Urgently addressing the severe housing costs of households on the SHA waitlist without preferential status

An interdepartmental team consisting of the Office of Housing (OH); the Human Services Department (HSD); and the City Budget Office (CBO), including the Innovation and Performance Team, in coordination with the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) shall be created to address the severe housing costs of the households on the SHA waitlist residing in Seattle without preferential status. The following steps shall be taken:

- A. By December 8, 2017, all Department Directors shall send the Mayor's Office a list of the direct benefit programs that their departments offer to low-income households that serve to reduce the costs of housing and other living expenses.
- B. By December 22, 2017, the Utility Discount Team of HSD shall engage the targeted households on the SHA waitlist without preferential status residing in Seattle. This engagement shall result in the expedited enrollment of eligible households in the Utility Discount Program and other City benefits for which they are eligible to reduce housing and other living costs as soon as possible.
- C. By January 12, 2018, the Interdepartmental Team shall develop a proposal for a pilot Seattle Rental Housing Assistance Program that addresses the severe housing costs of the targeted households. This program should consist of a combination of strategies that deploy (a) new rental assistance vouchers and/or subsidies for renters in existing housing and (b) new rental assistance that helps secure otherwise unaffordable rental units. The recommendations shall include:
 - a strategy that connects the activities contained in the recommendations with the desired outcome of preventing severely housing cost-burdened households from becoming homeless;
 - a full policy and fiscal analysis of the program and rent subsidy model(s);
 - the identification of funding; and
 - a plan to evaluate whether the recommended strategies have been effective in meeting my desired outcome.

Section 2. *Facilitating faster placements in affordable units for SHA voucher holders and households on the SHA waitlist*

The Office of Housing (OH) and the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) will expedite the impact of the Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) affirmative marketing policy by seeking commitments from existing MFTE property owners to advertise vacancies proactively to SHA in order to avail MFTE units to households on the SHA waitlist and SHA voucher holders. OH and SHA will convene MFTE property owners to facilitate partnerships between MFTE properties, SHA and community based-organizations. OH will also work with the housing developers whose current construction projects rely on funding from the Seattle Housing Levy or other City sources to determine whether there are opportunities to place those at the SHA waitlist as these projects reach completion. OH shall report to me on progress by January 31, 2018.

Section 3. *Creating an Affordability Portal for City Benefits*

A second interdepartmental team consisting of Human Services Department (HSD), Seattle City Light (SCL), Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE), Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL), Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), and any other departments with programs identified in Section 1(A) above, with support from the City Budget Office (CBO), including the Innovation and Performance Team, and the Seattle Information Technology Department (Seattle IT) shall develop a proposal to create a common affordability portal for city benefits such as the Utility Discount Program, Fresh Bucks, Child Care Assistance Program and the Vehicle License Rebate Program that help reduce the living expenses of low-income Seattle residents. The interdepartmental team shall determine opportunities to coordinate and verify eligibility requirements and streamline enrollment. A proposal and implementation plan shall be provided to my office no later than March 30, 2018.

Inquiries regarding this Executive Order should be directed to Leslie Brinson Price of the Mayor's Office.

Dated this 28th day of November, 2017.

Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor, City of Seattle