



City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

September 8, 2026

Seattle Renters' Commission Letter Affirming Support for the Revised Fort Lawton Redevelopment Plan

Dear Office of Housing and Seattle City Councilmembers:

The Seattle Renters' Commission is writing to affirm our support for the Revised Fort Lawton Redevelopment Plan and adopt Alternative One, the on-site redevelopment option.

This project represents a historic once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a substantial amount of affordable housing in Magnolia, a neighborhood where low-income, affordable development has historically been made nearly impossible by restrictive single-family zoning and persistent homeowner opposition. Low-income renters in this future development deserve to live in Magnolia and to be afforded the same high quality of life, access to open space, and educational opportunities as the current affluent population. Moving the affordable housing units to another location would be a disservice to future residents and a step backward for housing equity in Seattle.

The Commission believes that housing policy must actively undo historical patterns of economic and racial exclusion. Magnolia remains one of the highest-income and least economically diverse neighborhoods in Seattle, with a median household income of approximately \$180,789 (US Census Bureau ACS data). Meanwhile, the Haller Lake neighborhood, where Alternative Two proposes relocating all 500 affordable units, has a median household income of approximately \$107,000. Moving the proposed redevelopment near Haller Lake, nearly 8 miles from Fort Lawton, would only serve to further economically segregate our city by concentrating affordable housing in lower-income areas while insulating wealthy enclaves from growth.

Many concerns raised by nearby property owners involve traffic delays, changes in the visual character of the neighborhood, or reductions in views. We strongly believe minor operational inconveniences and aesthetics should not stand in the way of progress or housing equity. Lower-income households and formerly unhoused individuals should not be relegated to a smaller site in a commercial area next to a highway without sidewalks, a major arterial, and the county's household hazardous waste facility simply because of their income, especially when a 34-acre, publicly owned site is readily available and uniquely suited for a vibrant, mixed-income community.

We are in full agreement with the need for open spaces and canopy preservation across Seattle. However, the potential removal of up to 35 trees across a 34-acre site cannot justify blocking 500 units of critically needed affordable housing. New trees and habitats grow back quickly and easily, but we cannot readily undo the harms of lives broken by displacement and lack of affordable housing. Alternative One strikes a careful, balanced approach by integrating 22.49 acres of public parkland and natural habitat restoration alongside housing. Preserving tree canopy and creating deeply affordable housing are complementary environmental justice goals, not mutually exclusive ones.

As Seattle struggles with a severe housing affordability crisis, the City Council must take bold action to ensure that public land is leveraged for the public good. Approving the Revised Fort Lawton Redevelopment Plan with the on-site option is essential to expanding opportunity, combatting residential segregation, and building a truly inclusive city. We respectfully urge the City Council to approve Alternative One for the Fort Lawton site without weakening amendments or off-site diversions.

Sincerely,

Seattle Renters' Commission