



## THA Thanksgiving Update 2016

Dear Friends of THA:

As you may know, I write at this time of the year to catch you up on the news from the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA). Writing you is also a chance to reflect on THA's work, its value and what it takes to get it done. It takes hundreds of partners like you. Thanking you is another reason to write, especially at Thanksgiving. Reflecting on this may also help us think, in ways I suggest below, about the recent election and what it may mean for us, our work and the people we serve.

I begin with THA's mission as its Board has defined it. The mission comes in parts. The main part is to house low-income people, with a focus on the neediest. THA does that in three main ways. **First**, we develop real estate. We build, buy and rebuild properties that we then rent. We are one of our region's larger residential landlords. **Second**, we also help other nonprofit organizations that share our mission to finance and develop their housing. **Third**, we help people pay the rent to private landlords. Our various rental assistance programs do that.

All that is hard work, as our partners know. Yet we do not count that as the harder part of our job. The world knows how to do that work when it tries. It knows how to finance housing, design it, build it, manage it and rent it. The world knows how to design and run rental assistance programs. The world does not know nearly as much about the next part of THA's job. This next part seeks ways to spend a housing dollar, not just to house people, but also to get two other things done. **First**, THA seeks to help them succeed, not just as tenants but also, as our mission statement contemplates, as "parents, students, wage earners and builders of assets." We want their time with us to be transforming in these ways, and temporary. We want this

**I am interested in Tacoma's Section 8. I am currently homeless as a single mother with two children who is the age of 2 and 3. I am currently employed making \$15.24/hr working 40 hours a week. I have been searching for an apartment but do not have enough income to afford it on my own. Please let me know what I can do to get on the list. Very much appreciated! Thank You,  
- P.**

**[email to THA, November 18, 2016]**

for adults. We want this emphatically for children because we do not wish them to need our housing when they grow up. **Second**, we seek to spend a housing dollar to help our communities succeed and to help them do so equitably. We seek ways to help neighborhoods be “attractive places to live, work, attend school, shop and play” and for our city and county to be places that low-income people experience that are “safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive, and just.” The world does not quite know how to do that. What I so admire about THA’s staff and our many partners are their efforts to find it out. When it works it is a very good use of a housing dollar.

This work takes all of you: elected local, state and national leaders, their hardworking staff, public and private funders, lenders and investors, foundation and public program officers, architects, planners, builders, suppliers, construction workers, financial advisors, auditors, attorneys, grant writers, other housers, advocates, service partners, journalists, teachers and counselors, school district staff, police officers, community groups, unions, and neighborhood organizations.

**Hello,  
My name is L. and my fiance P. are in desperate need of some help in finding an affordable apartment together. P. just landed a job and I am in search. We have been spending all our funds on hotels and praying to find an apartment or help getting into something. We will be starting a family soon but need to have a place first. Can you help us? I have never done this before and am unsure what you need.**

**- L.**

**[email to THA, September 29, 2016]**

You make our work possible. You make the work effective. Also, you make it meaningful and enjoyable. On behalf of THA’s Board of Commissioners and staff, I wish to tell you that we are grateful.

Let me next say a word about THA and its people. THA is a board of five community volunteers that our mayor appoints. The Board defines our mission. It is the repository of our animating values. It sets our strategic choices. Perhaps most importantly, it is the vital source of our insistence about the value of this work and the people and communities we serve.

Trying hard to fulfill this hard mission is a staff of about 135 people. These include our real estate development staff of project managers, tax credit and financial experts, planners, and construction managers. Their job is to develop, build, buy and rebuild properties so they are well built, sustainable and attractive. THA’s staff includes maintenance specialists who keep our properties in good shape. They include property managers and lease and occupancy specialists who manage a long waiting list, screen applicants, verify income and eligibility, turn and lease units, collect rent, enforce the rules and do the hundreds of things it

takes to manage a large and varied portfolio, many of whose residents come to us from very challenging circumstances. Other staff manage THA's rental assistance programs. In partnership with hundreds of local landlords these programs serve several thousand households. THA's community service staff of caseworkers and program managers help seniors or disabled persons live independently. They help families stabilize after coming to us from homelessness or domestic violence. They help people be better parents, increase their earnings, find training, get treatment, learn English, improve their credit and save. THA includes policy planners who envision new programs to try, design them and evaluate them. THA also includes finance staff, accounting specialists, compliance officers, IT wizards, data and policy analysts, procurement specialists, human resources experts, clerks, and, perhaps most poignantly, receptionists who politely and respectfully welcome needy people who come seeking help that for the most part we are unable to provide because we are full.

**Hello my name is E. I'm 5 months pregnant and have a 2 yrs old daughter I have been homeless on the streets and looking for housing I need help I tried 211 so this is an option for me to get help please call me at 253 xxx-xxxxx or email me back**

**- E.**

**[email to THA, September 25, 2016]**

These staff persons do this work governed by numerous and exquisitely detailed rules, regulations and requirements from HUD, funders, lenders, investors, auditors as well as important if less precise community expectations. And they do it in five languages.

Here is a sampling of some of their work from the past year.

### **THA's EDUCATION PROJECT**

It was a year of progress, re-assessment, challenges and planning for THA's Education Project. This project is THA's search for ways to spend a housing dollar, not just to house a needy family, but also to help their children succeed in school and to improve the outcomes of the schools that serve low-income children. We do this work in an innovative and maturing collaboration with Tacoma Public Schools, Tacoma Community College, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, other funders, and nonprofit service providers. We are very fortunate to have such interested and capable partners. Here are some elements of the Education Project:

- **Elementary School Housing Assistance Project**  
This project seeks to stabilize elementary schools that have high student transient rates due to family homelessness. It began at McCarver Elementary



School in Tacoma's Hilltop. McCarver had more homeless children than any other school in the region, possibly the state. As a result, its student annual turnover rate had ranged between 100% and 179%. The project has five parts:

- (1) *Housing*: we have committed housing dollars to the schools to stabilize them. We do this with rental assistance to fifty homeless families at McCarver whose 85 children constitute about 20% of the school;
- (2) *Parental Commitments*: We ask the cohort parents to make three commitments: to keep their children enrolled at the school; to participate actively in their education and in the school; and to invest in their own education and employment prospects;
- (3) *Supportive Services*: The program provides cohort parents with close supportive services to help them fulfill their commitments. Part of that support comes from two THA caseworkers stationed at the school;
- (4) *Tacoma School District Investment*: The Tacoma School District invests in the schools to make them even more worthy of the commitment we ask the parents to make. For example, the school district made the substantial investment to bring to McCarver the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program.
- (5) *Third-party evaluation*: A third party evaluator, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, tracks and assesses an array of metrics. We are in our fifth year. The evaluation reports for the first four years are available by [clicking here](#). The results to date at McCarver are encouraging with some disappointments that will require program changes as we expand to other schools: the cohort children have a transient rate of 7% compared to 93.8%; the school's overall transient rate decreased to 81.8%; within the first two years of the program the cohort children increased their reading scores 22%, three times faster than comparable cohorts; by one reading measure 60%

**I would like to sign up for housing, I am a single mother of one son, I am 27 yrs. Of age as of October 13th. My son is P. he is 6 yrs.old.I would do anything to be accepted for section 8, please give me a chance, I know this is very important to me to do so to who it may concern we would very much so appreciate this. Thankyou so much for your time. Sincerely,  
- Y.**

**[email to THA, November 16, 2015]**

of them are reading on grade level, a 33% increase from the start of their participation; they are now performing as well as other children at the school. Reading scores school-wide have increased but we do not know if or to what extent the increase results from the program. The average income of cohort families has doubled. The average earned income has increased by 360%. However, the medium income for the cohort has not increased, largely because about a third of the families made no income progress due to mental disability, alcohol and drug dependency, or serious domestic violence trauma. As we redesign the program we have to take better account and be better prepared for families facing these challenges.

On the strength of these results, THA and Tacoma Public Schools made two decisions last year. **First**, starting last September we turned the program at McCarver from a pilot to a regular offering of the school. **Second**, we will expand the program to other elementary schools in Tacoma with ruinous student turnover rates because of family homelessness. We had hoped to begin that expansion this year. We are now set to begin it next September. In the meantime, we will redesign the program to account for what we learned. We have contracted with the Urban Institute to be our third party evaluator for the expansion.

- **College Housing Assistance Program**

In 2014, THA and Tacoma Community College (T.C.C.) began a pilot program to serve homeless enrolled T.C.C. students. T.C.C. has a student population of nearly 14,000 students. It is the largest post-secondary educational institution in the South Puget Sound Region. In comparison with students of other comparable institutions, T.C.C. students are older, lower income, more likely to be parents, more likely to be working and more likely to be the first in their family to attend college. 61% are women and 41% identify as a person of color. T.C.C. is justifiably proud of the warm welcome it gives to them all. A T.C.C. degree can transform their lives. On average, a student with a T.C.C. associate degree earns \$34,559 per year, 53.5% more than the average earnings of high school graduates.



Yet a worrisome number of these enrolled students are homeless or near homeless. The lack of stable housing presents formidable barriers to

academic success. The challenges are harder for homeless students who are also parents. Most homeless students drop out.

In September 2014, THA and T.C.C. launched a program with a pilot cohort of twenty-two homeless enrolled students. The participating cohort has an average age of 35, 10 years older than the average age among all T.C.C. students; 82% percent of the participating students are parents. The program has four parts:

- (1) *Rental Assistance During Enrollment:* THA provides rental assistance to T.C.C. students and dependents who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. The assistance lasts for three years, or until graduation, whichever occurs first.
- (2) *Expectations of Student:* To remain eligible for the housing assistance, participating students must: (i) be enrolled in 12 or more academic credits and otherwise make adequate academic progress toward a degree (T.C.C. tracks the adequacy of the student’s progress); (ii) maintain at least a 2.0 grade point average; (iii) participate in support workshops on topics such as financial literacy.
- (3) *Supportive Services:* T.C.C. provides students with comprehensive case management to help them navigate careers. Completion Coaches identify barriers and provide resources for these students. T.C.C. strives to build the cohort to provide its own peer-to-peer student support.
- (4) *Evaluation:* THA and T.C.C. will track and assess the following performance measures in comparison with unassisted homeless enrolled students and T.C.C. students generally: (i) grade point average; (ii) graduation rate; (iii) post-graduation earnings.

With two years of data, outcomes are preliminary, but promising:

	Homeless/Near Homeless TCC Students Receiving Housing Assistance (47)	Homeless/Near Homeless TCC Students Receiving No Housing Assistance (154)	General TCC Student Population
Graduated or Remaining Enrolled	60%	16%	Data point not available
Grade Point Average	3.05	2.75	2.97

On the strength of these results, THA and T.C.C. are planning the expansion to include all homeless T.C.C. students. As part of this expansion we are considering a companion program for homeless or near homeless T.C.C. students who started their studies while in prison and who need supportive forms of housing.

We have also begun discussions about a similar program with Bates Technical College and Clover Park Technical College.

- **Children’s Savings Account Program**

Children Savings Accounts (CSAs) are long-term asset-building accounts for education purposes after high school. When low-to-moderate-income students have such accounts they are more likely to succeed in school and enroll in college than their peers without such accounts. They are more likely to graduate.

**Greetings,**

**My family and I are in need of a home. We are currently living in a [3 bedroom house with three other adults]. I am a single mom or 3 kids. My eldest son is disabled and in a wheelchair. My boys share a room and my daughter and I sleep in the garage. Can you please lead me to the correct department if there is help available.**

- P.

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**[email to THA, July 27, 2014]**

In the fall of 2015 THA and Tacoma Public Schools (TPS) launched a CSA Program for children who attend public school from THA’s community of Salishan. Salishan is THA’s largest community. It is a HOPE VI redevelopment. It is a mixed-income neighborhood of renters and homeowners, community facilities, a regional primary health clinic, parks, an elementary school and a middle school next door, all on an award winning design. THA and TPS launch this in partnership with the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) in Washington, D.C., the YMCA of Tacoma-Pierce County, Heritage Bank, the Urban Institute, and a growing number of funders.

THA and TPS designed the CSA program to help Salishan students, and their families, aspire to college, prepare for it, pay for it and feel they belong when they go. It will get unbanked families banked, with financial skills. It will help unify the region’s most diverse neighborhood by eliciting and enlisting its shared hope and expectation that its children will graduate from high school and go to college. The CSA Program has four parts:

- (1) *Elementary School Stage:* When a Salishan student enrolls in elementary school, THA will offer a savings account in his or her name. THA will be the account custodian. THA will make an initial \$50 deposit into the account. THA will match the family's deposit into the account up to \$400 per year. This match will continue through 5th grade.



- (2) *Middle School through High School Stage:* When a student reaches 6<sup>th</sup> grade he or she and a counselor from the YMCA will devise a plan to take the student through high school graduation and enrollment in college. The plan will set milestones along the way, generally of an academic nature. *E.g.:* improved attendance; improved grade point average; enrolling in Washington State's College Bound Scholarship Program; taking the PSAT, SAT and ACT; taking college preparatory courses; applying to college; filling out the FAFSA early; getting into college; graduating from high school, and starting college. Upon the student reaching each milestone, THA will deposit more money into the account, up to \$700 per year.



A student who participates fully (with his or her family) will graduate from high school with an account balance of \$9,700. The program's contributions to that balance will then be available to the student only if and when he or she completes the journey and enrolls in a qualified education or training program after high school and then only for the costs of attendance. Washington State's College Bound Scholarship will pay for most tuition costs. Yet it is the non-tuition costs of attendance that defeat low-income

**I'm looking for someone that be willing to rent to me. I'm a newly single Parent I have two children ages 6 and 2 and I have a baby due in October. I however have an eviction on my record and it's been a very hard year paying that off. However I am willing to work harder then ever to keep a roof over my kid's head. If your willing to work with me please let me know. Thanks  
- B.**

**[email to THA, July 31, 2016]**



students, including and especially the cost of housing. The CSA will help with that.

- (3) *Financial Training*: TPS will knit the Junior Achievement financial literacy curricula into classroom time. The staff of Heritage Bank presents the material. Parents will receive financial training separately.
- (4) *Third Party Evaluation*: THA has contracted with the Urban Institute to track and evaluate outcome measures, both middle and long term.

THA has resolved not to launch a cohort unless it has funds committed to see the cohort through the full journey to high school graduation. Fund raising is well underway. THA has the funds committed for the cohort launched this year and the ones launching for the next two years.

The launch year was filled with the successes and challenges of trying something new. Only about 20% of eligible parents have signed up. Our individualized plans for middle schoolers did not get done. Family deposits are slower than we would hope. Although experience of other programs suggests we should have expected this.

We are rethinking how we market the program. We expect enrollment to speed up as enrolled parents spread the word. Most significantly, Heritage Bank, our wonderful banking partner in this effort, will be opening a branch bank at Salishan next year! That will make it easier for families to deposit money. It will make it easier to celebrate deposits. And when the children walk to and from school in Salishan they will pass the bank and think of their money in there.

**Hello. My name is K. I am 22 years old and am looking for help. My boyfriend and i both are trying to find a place to live but we cant seem to find anything we can afford. I am 5 months pregant and only work 20 hours a week at Safeway. He works 40 hours a week at ML. With his child support, truck payment, insurance payment, and other bills we are having a hard time finding a place for our family. I was wondering what i can do to get some assistance. We are staying with friends right now and I would really like to have my own place for my son. If you have any questions my number is 253-xxx-xxxx.**

**Thanks.**

**- K**

**[email to THA, October 13, 2014]**

Click here to learn more about [THA's Education Project](#).

## **THA's GROWING INVESTMENT IN FOSTER CHILDREN, HOMELESS YOUTH WITHOUT FAMILIES AND HOMELESS YOUNG ADULTS**

Under the leadership of the city and county, this year saw notable efforts and planning to serve Pierce County's growing population of foster children, homeless youth without families and homeless young adults. THA already helps to fund Pierce County's Rapid Rehousing programs for homeless persons, including young adults. That investment is important. THA's mainline housing programs are inaccessible to these people. We work off very long waiting lists that are of no help to people in crisis. Homeless youth do not even make it to our door for help. Our investment with Pierce County Rapid Rehousing system makes our dollars relevant and accessible to them when they are homeless.

In the past two years, a convergence of resources and resolve promises notable further progress.

- *Shelter and Drop-in Center*  
The City of Tacoma has opened a shelter and drop-in center for homeless young adults from ages 18 to 24 years. Its present location is temporary pending the search for a permanent place, which is underway. Community Youth Services (CYS) manages the shelter. CYS is a well-established and highly regarded service provider who has been doing this crucial work in Thurston County for 40 years. We are fortunate for CYS's willingness to bring its expertise to Pierce County.

**I am a 19 year old female who's experiencing homelessness while working a full time job, is there anything your program can do for me?**

**- G**

**[email to THA, July 27, 2016]**

- *Crisis Residential Center (CRC) and Transitional Housing*  
The City and the County have pledged funds toward the construction of a Crisis Residential Center (CRC) for twelve youths age 12 to 17 years. THA will develop the CRC as part of a campus of services on property it already owns. In addition to the CRC, it will offer housing for young adults age 18 to 24 years. It will offer employment services. All this will be under CYS's management.

**Hi my name is L. and I'm looking to get into my own place, I have a almost 5 year old daughter and we need a home, we live with [five other people] in [their] 3 bedroom trailer. I work 2 jobs and can afford about 500 per month I think, my monthly income is 1600. Please if there is anything you can help me with it would be greatly appreciated. You can reach me on this email or at 253 xxx-xxxx.**

**Thank you very much**

**- L.**

**[email to THA, June 23, 2016]**

In the meantime, this week CYS opened a CRC for five youths in a single-family home THA has provided. It is called New Directions. The State of Washington Department of Community Services is providing the operating funds. This home is a temporary location pending the development of the larger CRC on the THA youth campus. [Click here for a News Tribune article about the CRC.](#) This CRC received its first young person on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Here is an email the CYS program director wrote on the occasion to the many people who made New Direction's possible:

“In 1830, English novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton penned one of the most parodied lines in literature when he wrote, “It was a dark and stormy night...” Tonight in Pierce County, it is dark. And while it is not stormy, it is cold and raining. Even worse, the streets carry predators and a hundred other dangers that youth should never have to face.

“But there is a new hope in Pierce County. Here at New Directions we have already had three referrals. The first has arrived and is currently in the living room, watching Sponge Bob and talking with staff after having helped fix dinner. She has a history of running, but said this place seems “different.”

“She will be followed by hundreds of other youth. All of them will find a safe place to gather their thoughts, get their feet settled, and begin new steps in new directions. Safety, peace, healing, and new choices that lead to new futures will take root in each heart that finds refuge here. However, for tonight, that lies in the future. It is quiet and peaceful, and Sponge Bob saves the day.

“But in reality, you have saved the day. You did so with your hard work that made New Directions change from wild dream to solid reality.

“On behalf of our youth... Thank you!”

- *Intergenerational Community*

THA and its partners are planning an interesting community on other property THA owns. On the front acreage, we will build an apartment building offering rental housing for a wide range of incomes. On the back acreage, we will build single-family homes to rent to families who are adopting or fostering high needs children. We will have apartments for rent to seniors who by living there agree to be respite-care-givers, honorary grandparents and support for those adopting or fostering families next door. We will design such a community from a successful example in Portland. We do this in collaboration with Many Lights, our nonprofit partner.

In addition, in partnership with Amara, we plan a sanctuary home – a critical resource that Pierce County needs. Amara already manages one in Seattle. It offers foster beds for children that DSHS has removed from their

families but for whom DSHS does not yet have a foster home ready. In the meantime, the sanctuary home takes them. Amara has now opened a Pierce County office! This month it has opened a sanctuary home in a temporary location until THA can develop the permanent home.

We are excited about these possibilities. We are excited about these partnerships. They offer meaningful and expert responses to Pierce County's growing child welfare crisis. These children, teenagers and young adults can be poignant and remarkable in their quiet willingness to live the life handed to them.

But that life is not what they need or deserve and it not what the community needs them to have. Helping them to a better childhood and a more hopeful adolescence and adulthood is a very good use of a housing dollar.

## REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

Real estate development continues to be a THA focus. It serves several parts of THA's mission. It helps us to house people. It is our way to invest in neighborhoods that need the investment. This work helps to create or preserve a neighborhood's economic and racial diversity. When it builds THA also tries to set a high design bar. We tell ourselves that both ugly and lovely are contagious.

Design is especially important to THA's job to help our city attain the higher densities that the city's Comprehensive Plan directs. Higher densities can concern neighborhoods. We think of this as a design challenge. THA's job is to show that higher densities can be very attractive.

- **New Salishan**  
Developing New Salishan has been THA's preoccupation for the past decade. We tore down and rebuilt nearly 200 urban acres in a \$300 million investment. This investment recouped decades of underinvestment of both

**Hello my name is G. I am looking for apply for section 8 asap I am a full time student and taking care of my little two sisters. I am 20 years old and I am renting a room from a friend but I am facing an eviction right now. I receive tanf at the moment so dshs gave me the choice to pay my rent here or I look for a new apartment and they will pay my deposit. So I am seeing if I can get on section 8 and be able to get a place so we can have a home. If you would be able to call me my number xxx-xxx-xxxx I am up at 8 o'clock but if you can call and leave a message and I will get back right away. Thank you.**

**- G**

**[email to THA, July 16, 2014]**



public and private dollars in East Tacoma. We are nearing its completion with some notable elements still to finish. As a community, Salishan is doing well. It is the region's most diverse neighborhood by factors that in other parts of the market are segregating factors. At Salishan they are integrating factors: home-owner/renter, income, race, language, national origin, ethnicity, age, and ability/ disability. The challenge and the charm of Salishan, and the nation, are to help people live across those lines. One measure of Salishan's success is the sale of the single-family homes. This year our homebuilder partner, D.R. Horton, sold its last Salishan home! You can click [here](#) for an article about this milestone in The News Tribune.



- **Tacoma's Hilltop**

THA continues its investment in the Hilltop, one of Tacoma's oldest neighborhoods. This investment is timely. The Hilltop has been one of the city's poorest neighborhoods. It is changing fast. After decades of disappointed expectations, the Hilltop seems set to blossom. It is about to get a light rail line linking it to downtown Tacoma. Private developments are coming. The neighborhood is anchored by two large hospitals, a large regional health clinic, Bates Technical College, Evergreen State College and just down the hill, city and county offices and the growing campus of the University of Washington Tacoma. THA commissioned an interesting employment survey. It found that there are more than 20,000 jobs on the Hilltop or within easy reach. Yet, fewer than 500 Hilltop residents hold those jobs.



The development challenge is get more of those jobholders who work on the Hilltop also to live there and walk, shop, eat and play there. This untapped development potential is starting to show. Tacoma is the housing bargain of the West Coast and the Hilltop is the housing bargain of Tacoma. Rents are rising quickly. The social justice challenge is to get more of Hilltop's present residents into those jobs and help ensure that when the Hilltop develops, it does so equitably. If we do not do this right then in fifteen years the only affordable housing in the Hilltop may be what we now succeed in building and buying. To see what can happen if we do this wrong all we need do is look at what has happened to Seattle, Portland, Vancouver and San Francisco.

Two years ago, we cut the ribbon on Bay Terrace Phase 1 on the Hilltop not too far from the light rail route. It has 70 units of affordable housing in a mix of townhomes and a mid-rise apartment building amid green space, a hill climb and a community building. That community building hosts the Tacoma School District's first Head Start classroom outside a school building. This year we broke ground on Bay Terrace Phase 2. Construction is well under way.



THA is buying properties along the new light rail line. For example, THA purchased the Key Bank Building on South 11<sup>th</sup> just off of MLK. As an initial use of that building, we are excited about plans to host United Way's Center for Strong Families. Along with other nearby parcels that we own or are buying, this purchase allows us to master plan the area. This effort included several community convenings that collectively envisioned a lively, prosperous and diverse future of the Hilltop that we will try hard to realize.



- **Property Purchases**

THA continues its efforts to purchase apartment complexes. We do this for several reasons. **First**, we seek housing in parts of town where we judge that rising rents will make our vouchers less usable. When that happens, the only sure way to make it accessible to our voucher holders is to buy property. **Second**, our property purchases can help create or maintain the racial and economic diversity of our neighborhoods. **Third**, purchasing an apartment building or complex, even if it needs a fix-up, can be much less expensive than building anew. **Fourth**, our purchase and redo of a building that needs a fix-up can help spruce up a neighborhood. **Fifth**, we also hope these purchases will earn THA money.



- **Big Fix-Up of THA's Portfolio: "RAD"**

Last year I reported that we arranged the financing for a large-scale \$ 40 million fix-up of our portfolio. The money comes primarily



from tax credit equity investors and commercial debt. We do this as part of a HUD's program called Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD). This program has us trade in our public housing funding for Section 8 financing. We do this for several reasons. **First**, it is a way to finance the fix-up with dollars from private sources that public housing rules do not allow. **Second**, RAD does not get us more public money. Yet we judge that the Section 8 dollars are politically more stable than the public housing dollars. **Third**, it allows us to escape the regulatory burden that comes with the public housing program. This conversion should not affect our residents except for greatly improving the condition of their homes.



The largest part of this fix-up is now well underway. After the New Year, we will begin cutting the ribbon on the properties as their work finishes. The entire job should finish in 2018. That will take care of our oldest properties that were not previously financed with tax credits. It will see to their capital needs for the next 20 years.

We had planned on a second phase of RAD for our newer properties that are already tax credit financed. This includes Salishan and Hillside Terrace. We do want to trade in their remaining public housing units for Section 8. However, we decided not to do that, at least not now. Part of the reason for delaying this was that the deal terms and increased construction costs made the financing less attractive. Also, we found it hard within the program's deadlines to renegotiate the financing and documents with seven lenders, a tax credit investor, and grantors from the city, county and the state. In any case, this newer part of our portfolio does not need the fix-up right now. So for now we will continue with some public housing units.

**Dear Housing Authority Agent,**

**I am a 58 year old single disabled woman living on SSDI.**

**Could you please send me the application materials for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher? Thank you,  
- D.**

**Iemail to THA, August 17, 2016**

## **SOFTWARE CONVERSION**

THA is well underway with its mainline software conversion. You may know that such an experience is not something anyone would wish on themselves or their friends. Yet it can be essential. In THA's case, our vendor had stopped supporting our software. I mention all this because our choice of new software is revealing

about THA and its approach to its work. The safe choice of new software would have been one of the off-the-shelf products designed for the public housing industry. It would have done perhaps 75% of what we need. Yet it would have left unaddressed some of our most important needs for efficiency and program innovation. We would have had to tailor our programs goals to the software's limitations. Instead, we need software to follow our aspirations, and help get them done. For this reason, we decided to build what we need using Salesforce. If you are familiar with Salesforce you will know of its flexibility. This was the ambitious choice, in two ways. **First**, it was driven by our programmatic ambitions that need a flexible and sophisticated software. **Second**, it was ambitious because we needed to build this ourselves (using consultants). The choice was an occasion for THA to consult its ambitions and its willingness to bet on its own capacity. We go live with the software on January 1<sup>st</sup>. If it works, we will be much better for it. And if it all goes bust, you may read about us in the newspapers.

### SOME ELECTION REFLECTIONS

I expect most people at THA and others among are partners are still considering the recent presidential election and how to understand it. In particular, we wonder what it will mean for our work and the people and neighborhoods we serve. Here are some observations that seem to fit the situation:

Much of the work I describe above may depend on the budget and policy decisions of the new Administration and the Congress. We read that the President-Elect won the election on the strength of widespread grievance and anger from people left behind by the American economy and by policies that have given our nation its historically large margins of income and asset inequality. THA and its partners have for years been serving persons hurt in this way. We remain ready for serious efforts to address them.

**Dear section 8, I'm reaching out to you for help. I'm a single mom of 4 wonderful kids. Also I take care of my nephew and mother. But I struggle. I'm strong but can't do it all alone I need help. Please get back to me as soon as you can. Thanks  
- D.**

**[email to THA, October 22, 2014]**

We may have reason enough to worry. Yet, the policy consequences of such political shifts can be hard to anticipate. The history of the nation's housing policy offers two interesting examples that might give us some reason to hope. At least they mean that we should be alert to possibilities. The **first** example came with the attack during the Nixon Administration on the nation's public housing program. Amid that controversy arose the Section 8 program in 1974, which today is the nation's main source of operational dollars for programs to house poor people. The Section 8 program also greatly expanded the constituencies for this work to include



private landlords, who benefit from the rental subsidy. That expanded constituency helps explain the relative budgetary stability of the Section 8 program in comparison with the public housing program. The **second** example arose under the first Reagan Administration. The nation curtailed its investment in public housing and Section 8. Amid those budget controversies, in 1985, arose the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC). Despite its shortcomings, this program is now the nation's premier source of capital dollars to build and rebuild affordable housing. The LIHTC program also greatly expanded the constituency for affordable housing to include tax credit investors. Partly because of that expanded constituency, there has not been a serious threat to the LIHTC program or its budget through Republican and Democratic administrations and Congresses. I mention these examples to show that progress can come at unexpected times and in ways that we cannot foresee. Perhaps the new Administration and Congress may surprise us.

Any such surprise gains will likely be modest in comparison to the growing need for affordable housing. It will surely modestly compare with any large-scale national retreat from the investments required for the people and communities we serve. And any prospect for gain requires that we be alert for them. Doing this will call upon some things that THA and its partners are good at and on some adventures that we all enjoy:

- This work we all do has never been easy. You have been effective because you are flexible and imaginative, and because you do not scare easily. I expect the years ahead will require more flexibility, more imagination and more nerve.
- If the prospects for national progress dim, perhaps we can intensify our focus on what we can do locally for our state, our county, our city, our neighborhoods, and our developments. The work we do has always been decidedly local.

**My wife and I are both disabled and she is 64 and will be 65 in May 2016, I am 58 and will be 59 in March of 2016. We currently live in our own home for the passed 23 years and we have been served with Trustee sale papers. Sale is due to be in June of 2016. Our home is a 1978 mobile home which we can not get funding for due to the age of the mobile. We are needing to find affordable housing hopefully in the Pierce County area do to my wife's doctors and appointments she needs to continue going too. . . . Otherwise I fear we will be homeless and unable to continue her treatments. We also are raising [our grandchild] after our daughter passed away in 2002.**

**- E.**

**[email to THA, February 23, 2016]**

- THA is fortunate in its local communities. Tacoma and Pierce County and its political and business leadership offer a congenial environment for this work we all do. We have among our local, state and federal council members, mayors and county executives, representatives and senators, both state and national, some of the best we could wish for. They are smart. They take the work seriously. They work very hard at a very hard job. They are problem solvers. They know how to lower the temperature of a discussion, and to engage a wide variety of persons and audiences in search of a solution. They seem to have the stamina and patience the situation will need of them. They know our work well. And they will need help from all of us to equip them with the data, information and policy ideas they will need in the legislative and policy discussions to come.

**I am trying to find out how to start the process for applying for a housing voucher. We are a family of 4 (two kids, two adults) with one on the way. My fiance is currently on disability and I am working. We have been staying in a hotel since September and are looking desperately for a permanent home. if I could be be advised on how to apply for a housing voucher that would be greatly appreciated.**

**-- T.**

**[email to THA April 5, 2016]**

We also have strong partners for our work, both for-profit and non-profit. Tacoma and Pierce County in particular are good at collaboration. All this is critical. We cannot do it alone.

- The national government is not the only repository of important values. State and local organizations, agencies, businesses and leaders as much to create to the community that people experience. The values they show is especially important for those among us who cannot create their own welcome because they are poor, from another country, or of varying skin colors, sexual orientations or and languages.



Perhaps most importantly, we need to show a continuing and emphatic insistence that the work we do and the people we serve are important. Nothing in the election changes that. It helps THA to maintain this insistence because our Board wrote it into

our statements of vision, mission and values. I attach a copy. We will keep these statements firmly in view. Perhaps they can light the way through the confusion and shade that may be coming. We will remember, as our statement of values tells us, that this work we do is “honorable work.” “We will do it honorably, effectively, efficiently, with pride, compassion and respect.” It also says we will show “a good humor.” That will help too.

On behalf of THA’s Board of Commissioners and staff, I hope your holidays are peaceful and meaningful.

Michael

**Michael Mirra**

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***“Housing Tacoma Forward”***



# TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

## Statements of Vision, Mission and Values

Amended by the THA Board: February 27, 2013

### THA's Vision

THA envisions a future where everyone has an affordable, safe and nurturing home, where neighborhoods are attractive places to live, work, attend school, shop and play, and where everyone has the support they need to succeed as parents, students, wage earners and neighbors.

### THA's Mission

THA provides high quality, stable and sustainable housing and supportive services to people in need. It does this in ways that help them prosper and help our communities become safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive and just.

### THA's Values

#### Service

Work in service to others is honorable. We will do it honorably, effectively, efficiently, with pride, compassion and respect.

#### Integrity

We strive to uphold the highest standards of integrity and ethical behavior.

#### Stewardship

We will be careful stewards of the public and private financial and environmental resources entrusted to us.

#### Communication

We value communication. We strive to be open and forthcoming with our customers, employees and colleagues, our partners, and our communities. We will listen to others.

#### Diversity of Staff

We value the diversity of our staff. It makes us stronger and more effective.

#### Collegial Support and Respect

The work we do is serious. We seek to create an atmosphere of teamwork, support and respect. We also value a good humor.

#### Excellence

We strive for excellence. We will always seek to improve.

#### Leadership

Everyone at THA, the Board, management and staff, shares the leadership it will take to extend these values throughout THA's work, to fulfill the mission and to advance the vision for our city.



# TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

## Strategic Objectives

Amended by the THA Board: February 27, 2013

### **Housing and Supportive Services**

THA will provide high quality housing, rental assistance and supportive services. Its supportive services will help people succeed as tenants, parents, students, wage earners and builders of assets who can live without assistance. It will focus this assistance to meet the greatest need.

### **Housing and Real Estate Development**

THA will efficiently develop housing and properties that serve primarily families and individuals unable to find the affordable and supportive housing they need. Its work will promote the community's development. Its properties will be financially sustainable, environmentally innovative, and attractive.

### **Property Management**

THA will manage its properties so they are safe, efficient to operate, good neighbors, attractive assets to their neighborhoods and places where people want to live.

### **Financially Sustainable Operations**

THA seeks to be more financially self-sustaining.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

THA will develop and operate its properties in a way that preserves and protects natural resources.

### **Advocacy and Public Education**

THA will advocate for the value of its work and for the interests of the people it serves. It will be a resource for high quality advice, data and information on housing, community development, and related topics. THA will do this work at the local, state and national levels.

### **Administration**

THA will have excellent administrative systems. Its staff will have skills that make THA highly efficient and effective in the customer service it provides to the public and among its departments. It will provide a workplace that attracts, develops and retains motivated and talented employees.