



2017 Tacoma Housing Authority

COMMUNITY

REPORT



78

Years of
Community Service

Tacoma Needs Affordable Housing

If we were speaking of food instead of housing, we would recognize widespread malnutrition in Tacoma, with pockets of starvation.

Speaking of housing, we see that large segments of Tacoma's population cannot afford their housing. They are paying more than 30% of a modest income for rent. Many pay well more than 50%. A worrisome number have no housing- families with children, disabled adults, youth without families, young adults, and seniors.

In 2017, the Tacoma City Council declared the extent of the city's homelessness to be a public health emergency.

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“The fact that a person is on Section 8 isn't a character deficiency; it may be a wage deficiency.”

-Tom Glenn, longtime Tacoma landlord

Tacoma's Housing Crisis

2017

May 9, 2017, Tacoma declares homeless state of emergency.

\$21.96

The hourly wage needed to afford a 2 bedroom in Tacoma

Tacoma needs

17,400

more affordable housing units for low income households.

8.8%

Tacoma's median rents rose 8.8% from 2016 to 2017





**Emails
to THA**

Every year THA gets emails from people seeking housing. They remind us of the need and what happens to people and families that cannot find a home. Throughout this report you will see a small sample of these emails.



Help With Housing | 6/21/2017

"To whom it may concern,

I am currently homeless and looking for a place to live. I have a daughter who is 14 years old and I really need to find a place for us. I have been all over looking for something and I've had no luck. Please tell me there's something you can do for me soon. It's almost been a year and I really need a place to live and a place for my daughter to call home. I feel like I'm losing her. Please help me."

What We Do & Who We Serve



11,000
people housed by THA

39%
of the people THA helps
are children and youth

67%
of families served are
extremely low income

1,460
households live at
our properties

4,207
households receive assistance
to pay rent to private landlords

\$34.2
million dollars paid for
Housing Assistance Vouchers

Note from the Executive Director

Tacoma Housing Authority's main job is to house people in need. THA does this in several ways. It builds, buys, and rebuilds housing that it then rents. It is Tacoma's largest residential landlord. It helps to finance and develop housing for nonprofit organizations that share our mission. It helps households pay rent on housing they lease from private landlords. This work is important, and challenging. Yet, it is not the harder part of THA's job. The world knows how to design housing, finance it, build it and manage it. The world knows how to run rental assistance programs.

The world does not know quite as much about the next part of THA's job. This next part seeks to spend a housing dollar, not only to house people, but also to get two other things done. First, THA seeks to help people succeed, not just as tenants, but also, as our vision statement contemplates, as "parents, students, wage earners and builders of assets". We want this success certainly for adults. We want it emphatically for children because we do not wish them

to need our housing when they grow up. This explains our large investment in our partnerships with public schools and colleges. Second, we seek to help our communities succeed, and to help them do so equitably. We invest to make neighborhoods attractive places for all to "live, work, attend school, shop and play" and to help our communities be "safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive and just". The world does not know quite as much about how to do that. THA and its many partners try to find it out. When we succeed, it is a very good use of a housing dollar.

We want this success certainly for adults. We want it emphatically for children, because we do not wish them to need our housing when they grow up.

- Michael Mirra

In this work, THA and its partners must face longstanding questions about poverty, the effect of place on a family's prospects to escape it, and how a housing dollar can help. This work entangles us in issues of economic justice, racial justice, individual responsibility, community development and how housing fits. We and our partners see these questions up close. That makes this work challenging. Sometimes we see the

answers. That makes this work meaningful.

THA is a board of five volunteer Commissioners and about 130 staff. These include real estate development experts, property managers, maintenance specialists, rental assistance staff, caseworkers, account specialists, clerks, asset and risk managers, compliance officers, IT wizards, data and policy analysts, program planners, and human resource managers. Perhaps most poignantly, they include receptionists who politely and respectfully welcome people in need seeking our help. We also rely on many partners, public and private, who make our work possible.

I invite you to learn about THA and its work. I hope this report helps you do that.

Michael Mirra

Executive Director, Tacoma Housing Authority



Homeless & Expecting in June 8/23/2017

"I'm in desperate need of housing and need help with the process if somebody can contact me via email. my phone is off i dont have money to pay the bill. please thank you regards."



Housing Help | 8/23/2017

"I am Deaf & Disabled with my Son. Desperately looking for housing in Pierce/Thurston County Washington... In Motel for only two more Days then back in my Van... I have Pledges for up to \$300 now & My SSDI comes in tomorrow!!! Help!!! Please!!!"

THA does its work in several ways.



Real Estate Development - We develop housing & real estate.



Property Management - We own and manage affordable apartments & homes that we offer for rent. We are the largest residential landlord in the area.



Rental Assistance - We help people pay their rent for apartments or homes that they lease from private landlords. This is how we serve most of the people we help. We do this in partnership with hundreds of private landlords.



Supportive Services - We provide or arrange supportive services. We seek to help people succeed not just as tenants, but also as "parents, students, wage earners and builders of assets."



Partnerships - We cannot do this work alone. We rely on our many partners.



THA & its Several Facets - We are a public housing authority. We are also a Moving to Work (MTW) public housing authority, one of only 39 in the country. Our MTW status helps us do this work creatively, efficiently and flexibly to account for the needs and markets of Tacoma and Pierce County. We have a nonprofit affiliate organization. We are also a public development authority. That helps too.



Dawn's Story

Dawn found herself homeless in 2010 with three children. She faced some tough challenges. She did not graduate from high school. She had once been addicted to methamphetamines. And she did not have a home. But Dawn also had strong advantages. One of them was the ability to use the resources around her. She lived in transitional housing. There she met a social worker whom Dawn credits with believing in her and her ability to change her life. The social worker told her "now go out and do it". That's exactly what Dawn did.

The HOP

In 2013, THA launched the Housing Opportunity Program (HOP). It is a rental assistance program to help low-income families pay rent on the private rental market. HOP replaced THA's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program for newly assisted households. HOP differs from the Housing Choice Voucher program in three main ways:

- Fixed, usually lower, subsidies
- Five year time limits for work-able households
- Enhanced supportive services for HOP households

Dawn heard about a new THA housing program for homeless families with children at McCarver Elementary School where her two youngest children went. She was one of the first families to enroll in what is now THA's Elementary School Housing Assistance Program. With THA's rental assistance in hand, Dawn shopped for a house to rent. She saw a sign outside a home she liked. By the time she inquired, the sign was gone. She called the landlord anyway. She asked if the home was still available.

“Without stable housing, college would not have been possible.”

- Dawn

It was. Dawn lives in that same house today. Her relationship with her landlord changed them both. During the recession, Dawn's landlord, who works at the Tacoma Police Department, noticed the amount of vacant and dilapidated homes in Tacoma. They started investing with the goal of rehabbing the houses to rent to families like Dawn's. Dawn's landlord says their experience with Dawn and her family has been extremely positive.

After her children graduated from elementary school, Dawn shifted from the Elementary School Housing Assistance Program to THA's time-limited Housing Opportunity Program. She enrolled in Tacoma Community College. She graduated with an Associates Degree. But that was just the start. She continued her education at University of Washington Tacoma. She now has her Master's Degree in Social Work. Dawn's daughter attends Pierce College. While in school, Dawn got an internship at Pacific Lutheran University (PLU). They then hired her full time as the Gender Based Violence Advocate.

Dawn co-parents with the father of her 3 children. Dawn also recently adopted 2 children whose parents could not find their way out of addiction. All of Dawn's children have become used to the college going culture in their home. All of them plan to attend PLU. They see college as an opportunity for their future.

Dawn also works with her THA Family Self-Sufficiency Case Manager, Sharon, to save for her first home. She hopes to buy a home near PLU.

Her and her family's future is bright.

498

participants enrolled

47%

are elderly or disabled

29.40%

Average Rent Burden for Households

Purpose of our Education Project:

- spend a housing dollar, not just to house people, but also;
- help them and their children succeed in school
- promote the success of the public schools and colleges in Tacoma that serve low-income students



Education Project

College Savings Account *for the Children of Salishan*



Low-income children and children of color now graduate from high school in Tacoma at rates comparable to other children. This is a tremendous achievement and a credit to Tacoma Public Schools and the community support it earns and receives. Yet a high school diploma is not enough. Research shows that a main indicator for adult prosperity is the degree or certificate after high school.

Research from Prosperity Now reports that low-income children with even modest balances in college savings accounts, starting young, are three times more likely to enroll in college and four times more likely to graduate.

In 2015, THA in partnership with Prosperity Now, Tacoma Public School, Heritage Bank and others launched the Children's

Savings Account (CSA) program for the children of Salishan. This program helps parents and children expect that they will go to college, prepare for it, pay for it and feel they belong when they get there. The CSA Program, which is available to all children regardless of income, will also help knit together one of the region's most diverse neighborhoods by eliciting and enlisting its communal hope and expectation that all its children will graduate from high school and go to college or other training.

Headstart at THA

THA's Bay Terrace has a Community Center. Its anchor tenant is the Tacoma Public School Districts only Head Start program outside a school building. This Head Start program provides free Pre-Kindergarten schooling, services and support for eligible families. THA and TPS count this as a big success. They seek to bring other Head Start programs to more THA properties.



“This undertaking is innovative and impactful. We look forward to watching it grow.”

- Jeff Deuel,
CEO & President of Heritage Bank



THA distributed over 10,000 free children's books to families in 2017.



Elementary School Housing Assistance Program

The Tacoma Housing Authority and Tacoma Public Schools (TPS) began the Elementary Housing Assistance Program six years ago at McCarver Elementary School in Tacoma's Hilltop neighborhood. At the time, McCarver had a student transient rate that ranged up to 179% a year. This resulted largely from family homelessness.

THA and TPS began an innovative pilot program to improve school outcomes for homeless school children and their families. It provides rental housing vouchers for up five

years to 50 homeless McCarver families. The program provides case management and supportive services to help them stabilize.

Five years of promising data now allow THA and TPS to plan the program's expansion throughout the City. They are redesigning the program to account for what they learned in five years. The redesign also must account for Tacoma's new, unaffordable rental market.



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“Our partnership with THA has been instrumental in bringing together housing and education to make student's lives better and help them succeed.”

-Dr. Thu H. Ament, Tacoma Public School
Director of K-12 Leadership Development



In Need of Help | 6/9/2017

“Im currently a week away from 6 months pregnant and i need to find housing im about to be a single mom. I have a job and i am in school. Im looking into all of my options and i only get about 10 hours a week at work due to being in school. Please i need help.”

College Housing Assistance Program

Tacoma Community College (TCC), with 14,000 students, is the largest postsecondary educational institution in the South Puget Sound region. In comparison with other colleges TCC students have lower-incomes. They are more likely to be the first in their family to attend college. They are more likely to be working. They are much more likely to be parents. TCC has a well-earned reputation for welcoming these students warmly.

Yet, a growing number enrolled at TCC are homeless. In a 2016 survey, 27% of TCC students reported an experience of homelessness in the 12 months prior to answering the survey. It is hard to go to school without a place to live. The challenges are harder for homeless students who are also parents. Most homeless students drop out.

In 2015, THA and TCC launched an innovative response – their College Housing Assistance Program. It began as a pilot that served 45 homeless enrolled students. During its first 2 years, the results were very encouraging: 60% of the homeless TCC

students that received rental assistance were still enrolled, or had graduated with an average grade point average of 3.05, higher than the school as a whole; of the 150 homeless students who applied but could not fit in the pilot, only 16% remain enrolled with an average grade point average of 2.75.

THA expanded its CHAP program to 150 students in 2017.



This data allowed TCC and THA to expand the program to scale in 2017, with an ever replenishing cohort of 150 students. This expansion will also include a sub-cohort of homeless students who begin their TCC studies in prison and, after their release, continue their studies on campus. Most of them are moms reuniting with children.

The TCC program, like the ESHAP, must account for Tacoma's new unaffordable rental market. Participants, even with THA's rental assistance, are having trouble finding housing reasonably close to the campus. In response, THA is purchasing apartment complexes and land for housing development within walking distance of the campus.

“

“I heard about CHAP before I enrolled at TCC, around the end of 2015, by doing research on community colleges in the region with paralegal programs. The chance to get help to end my homelessness, as well as TCC having the closest APA-approved paralegal program, tipped the scales and motivated me to enroll. I'm glad I did, as I've fallen in love with Tacoma.”

-Emerson

Arlington Drive Youth Campus

854

**Pierce County youth
& young adults were
homeless in 2017.**

**Goal: Provide homeless youth
& young adults with a second
chance at a reasonable
adolescence and adulthood.**

On any given night in Pierce County, 90 or more unaccompanied youth or young adults are homeless. In 2017, at least 854 youth and young adults in Pierce County were homeless. These are probably undercounts. Many of these young people are fleeing abuse at home. They make the plausible judgment that the streets are safer. Yet on the streets, they face high risks of further abuse, violence, sex trafficking, addiction, and greatly diminished prospects for an education, a livelihood, a family and a reasonable life.

With its many partners, THA will build the Arlington Drive Youth Campus next to its Salishan Community. It will house, serve and save homeless youth without families ages 12-17 years and homeless young adults ages 18 -24 years, 30% of whom have children.

The campus will offer the following:

A 12 bed Crisis Residential Center (CRC) for homeless youth without families, age 12 to 17 years. Community Youth Services will manage this Center. It has done this work for over 40 years in Thurston County. For the last two years, it has managed a 6 bed CRC in a THA single family home in Tacoma.

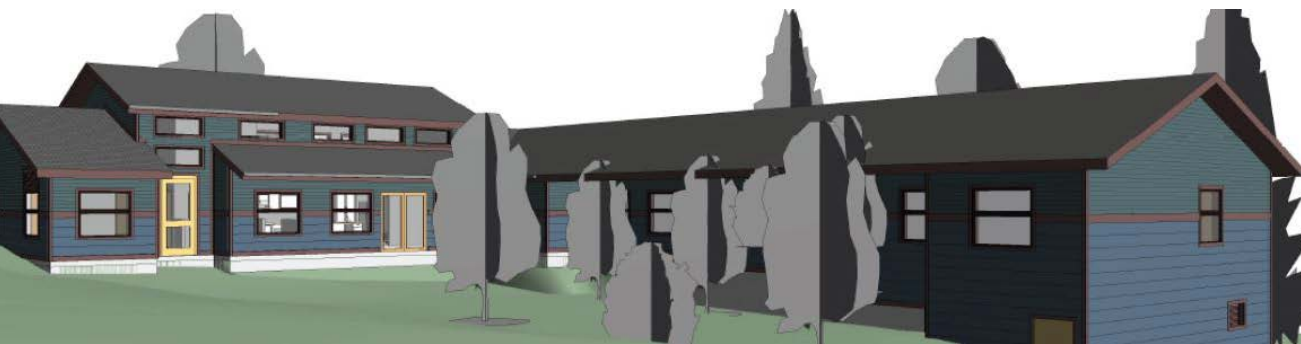
The campus will have 40 to 60 rental apartments for homeless young adults, age 18 to 24 years, facilities for supportive services; social enterprises for job training.

Arlington Drive is in a good spot for this work. It is in walking distance of the following complementary facilities:

- Tanbara Regional Primary Health Care Clinic
- Lister and Blix Elementary Schools
- East Side Community Center by Metro Parks
- Bates Technical College Salishan Campus (planned)
- The region's largest child care provider (planned)

Arlington Drive will give these youth and young people a second chance at a reasonable adolescence, a second chance at a reasonable adulthood and a second chance at a life without exploitation, impoverishment and fear.

Arlington Drive is not a usual undertaking for a housing authority. Planning it matured THA's understanding of where it fits in housing people, like homeless youth and young adults. These young people need services that THA does not provide, does not know how to provide, and does not wish to learn. Instead, THA will do this with high capacity partners who do that work well. THA's contribution is to provide the land, the real estate development expertise to build it, the capital dollars to pay for the construction, the property management expertise to manage the property, the rental assistance to give the property an operating income, and perhaps most importantly, THA will offer these young people something they may not get in many other places - a warm and safe welcome.



West Tacoma Investments

THA judges that the rental market in West Tacoma means that in five years the only notable measure of affordable housing in that neighborhood and its only notable extent of racial and economic integration will come from what THA and its partners own, buy or build now.

In response, THA is purchasing apartment complexes and land for development in the area. These purchases also serve two other purposes.

First, these properties are in easy walking distance of Tacoma Community College (TCC). THA's College Housing Assistance Program provides rental assistance to homeless enrolled TCC students. Yet the area's rental market is increasingly unaffordable to these students, even with THA's rental assistance. THA's property purchases will ensure that at least some housing near the campus is available to them.

Second, these properties are good investments for THA. They are in a rising market. They are in walking distance of a commu-

nity college, a lively commercial core, a transit hub and the planned termination station for the next extension of Tacoma's light rail line. For these reasons, these properties either through their rental income or their investment value will help subsidize THA's programs.

James Center North

In 2017, THA purchased 7 acres of underutilized retail space called James Center North. It is across the street from TCC. THA will develop 300 to 500 apartments with new commercial and community spaces.

Highland Crest

THA purchased Highland Crest. It has 73 apartments ranging in size, from studios to 3 bedrooms. It too is across the street from TCC.

Outrigger

THA purchased Outrigger Apartments. It is three blocks from TCC. It has 49 one and two bedroom apartments.

In The News:

"How's this for a bold move: "THA purchased the cluster of underused buildings in the James Center North plaza with the vision that one day they will be replaced with 300 to 500 mixed-income housing units.

This purchase was a leap of faith to be sure, but it adds to mounting evidence that THA's mission goes beyond providing housing for low-income residents and has moved toward building bridges for them to reach middle class status. . . .

Consider the strategic location: The property sits across the street from Tacoma Community College, a major transit hub and eventual terminus for a light rail line. It demonstrates the agency's willingness to address root causes of poverty: not just unaffordable shelter, but lack of access to transportation and education opportunities."

-Tacoma News Tribune Editorial,
More affordable housing near TCC is a smart investment (November 13, 2017).



Housing | 8/23/2017

My name is Christine. I am fighting breast cancer. I am in search of housing right away! I am renting a room. It is not a safe place for me. I don't know from one day to the next if I'm going to have a home. Can you please help me?

THA Board of Commissioners



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THA 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 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.

Tacoma Housing Authority

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