

August 17, 2015

Select Committee on Housing Affordability  
Seattle City Council  
Seattle City Hall  
600 Fourth Avenue, 2nd Fl.  
Seattle, WA 98104



Dear Chair O'Brien & Councilmembers,

**The Growing Together Coalition, represented by the organizations in the housing, social justice, labor, environmental, human services, design, and faith communities listed below, requests your strong support and implementation of the HALA Committee's affordable housing strategy recommendations.** The Growing Together Coalition, led by the Housing Development Consortium Seattle-King County (HDC) and Puget Sound Sage, supports affordable housing policies that enable Seattle's workers and their families to live near jobs in the city. We strive toward a city where all people, regardless of income, have the opportunity to thrive in a safe neighborhood with good jobs, quality schools, strong access to transit, and plenty of parks and open space for a healthy lifestyle.

The HALA Committee, convened by the Council and Mayor Murray, has recommended bold strategies to achieve the construction and preservation of 20,000 income-restricted affordable homes and 30,000 additional market-rate homes in the next decade. Success will require diligent and speedy adoption of the many HALA recommendations. Specifically, **we urge your strong commitment and timely action to adopt HALA's Grand Bargain: a mandatory residential inclusionary housing program, commercial linkage fee, and corresponding upzones to achieve construction of 6,000 affordable homes in 10 years.** By tying affordability to increased development capacity in select zones, we will be able to serve thousands of low-income individuals and families and build housing for our growing workforce.

Years of learning have demonstrated that a mandatory, inclusionary housing program (including a commercial linkage fee) is Seattle's best alternative for significantly increasing our supply of affordable housing. We have always believed that Seattle can achieve density and affordability together. In order to provide opportunities for affordable housing while also preventing displacement of current community members, new upzone capacity must be tied to a requirement to produce or otherwise contribute to affordable housing development.

We have long supported a comprehensive inclusionary housing program that applies broadly across the city, promotes affordable housing within new developments, and requires developer contribution to affordable housing. After much discussion and debate, businesses, non-profits, and community stakeholders have come to agreement on the best way to implement these principles. We are relying on you to ensure this HALA recommendation is implemented fully and swiftly, with a commercial linkage fee adopted no later than October, 2015, a Downtown

and South Lake Union program implemented by summer, 2016, and a robust program throughout Seattle's residential neighborhoods fully implemented by fall, 2017. Should the timeline be delayed, program requirements should be adjusted accordingly to achieve the established goal of creating 6,000 homes in 10 years.

We cannot wait any longer to take action. Every day we wait, the disproportionate effects of displacement are bearing down on communities of color, immigrants, refugees, and low-income seniors. Every day we wait, more workers have to commute from outside Seattle to their jobs in the city, worsening traffic, polluting the air, and negatively impacting employers and community, just to find an affordable home for their families. These impacts create very real costs to our economy and our society that the City can choose to mitigate now. It is fair, reasonable, and prudent to ask those who are most benefiting from Seattle's growth to contribute to affordability.

In 2014, another "grand bargain" was reached, the \$15 minimum wage, which set the stage for Seattle's lower-income workers to be able to support themselves and live in the communities where they work. However, without affordable housing choices, workers will continue to move out of the city, and the promise of a diverse, thriving community will be lost. The Grand Bargain for affordability builds on the promise of the \$15 minimum wage through the construction of more housing overall and implementation of new tools and funding targeted for greatly needed affordable housing for low-income households.

While inclusionary housing is our best tool for addressing the needs of our growing population, we will need additional tools to address the very real needs of Seattle's current residents. Over 2,800 people are sleeping outside on any given night, and more than 45,000 lower-income families are spending more than half their income on housing, placing them at very real risk for homelessness. To that end, **we urge your support for these other key strategies:**

- 1. Voter renewal of a doubled Seattle Housing Levy**
- 2. State authorization of a local .25% Real Estate Excise Tax for affordable housing**
- 3. State authorization of a Housing Preservation Program**
- 4. City promotion of the goal of sustainable homeownership, including support for permanently affordable homeownership**
- 5. Council adoption of a stronger tenant relocation assistance ordinance and other policies that increase access to housing and minimize and mitigate displacement.**

The HALA Report lays out bold and comprehensive recommendations—based on ten months of research, outreach, and hard fought agreement—to ensure everyone in Seattle has a safe, healthy, and affordable home. The organizations represented below remain fully committed to implementing these recommendations. We urge you to join us toward building an equitable, inclusive Seattle where everyone can share in our city's growth and prosperity. The time for leadership is now.

Sincerely,

Housing Development Consortium Seattle-  
King County

Puget Sound Sage

Futurewise

SEIU 775

Tenants Union of Washington State

SEIU 1199 NW

Uptown Alliance

Plymouth Housing Group

Mercy Housing NW

Unite Here Local 8

Casa Latina

Compass Housing Alliance

Real Change

Building Changes

Bellwether Housing

SMR Architects

Homestead Community Land Trust

El Centro de la Raza

Lifelong AIDS Alliance

Parkview Services

Church Council of Greater Seattle

One America

Sierra Club

Teamsters Local 117

Capitol Hill Housing

Washington Low Income Housing Alliance

Eritrean Association of Greater Seattle

Beacon Development Group

The Illuminatio Project

Schemata Workshop

Shelter Resources, Inc.

National Community Land Trust Network

Muslim Housing Services

Tonkin Architecture

Ally Community Development

Imagine Housing

Sage Architectural Alliance

Working Washington