

October 6, 2016

Dear ARCH member cities,

When eastside cities created ARCH, they did so with the goal of working collaboratively in order to ensure that their communities would be places where seniors, people with special needs, and families of all incomes could live affordably. This vision resulted in a unique partnership, which over the last 25 years has created thousands of affordable homes – homes that otherwise would not exist. The below organizations, representing an array of nonprofits and service providers across the east side, share these values of inclusivity and appreciate the important work that your partnership has achieved. However, in order to respond to the vastly increased need for affordable homes in our region, we urge you to collectively triple your contributions to the Eastside Housing Trust Fund for the 2017-19 budget cycle.

We have asked that the ARCH Executive Board bring the existing parity goals, which were established in 1998, up to date by setting a new goal range of \$3-6 million total. Many cities base their draft budget proposals on these parity goals, which provide a suggested range for individual cities' contributions, using a combination of population size, employment statistics, and other factors to determine each city's suggested contribution. Cities originally set these ranges with the goal of producing a total of \$1-2 million for affordable housing, and you have reliably succeeded in this. Since that time, however, the cost of rents, home prices, and building affordable homes on the east side have all approximately doubled. Given that these goals are seriously out of date, we ask that your cities choose to set higher standards for your contributions.

If you were to respond to these increases by doubling the size of the trust fund, this would bring us back to the original level of production intended. However, in light of the immense and growing need for housing affordability in our community and the dramatically changed economic context of our region, we do not believe that a return to the status quo of the late 1990s is sufficient. Instead, we urge you to demonstrate your commitment to addressing the housing crisis in our region by tripling your collective contribution.

Much has changed over the last 20 years on the east side, especially the cost of housing. As rents and home prices rise, more and more people are being priced out of their east side communities, including food service workers in our local restaurants, administrative and janitorial staff in our schools and hospitals, and young people who return from college in hopes of making a life in their hometowns, only to find that they can't afford to do so unless they move back into their parents' homes. With this increase in the cost of housing, we have also seen increases in homelessness in our communities. During the 2016 One Night Count, 245 people were found sleeping outside on the east side, while over 30,000 East King County residents pay more than 50% of their incomes on housing, putting them just one crisis away from losing their homes. In addition, the five school districts that serve ARCH member cities reported a collective total of 828 homeless students during the 2014-15 school year.

We know that many cities are pursuing legislative strategies that would provide additional local funding authority, and we applaud this work and hope to partner with you on this and other possible solutions. However, the members of your community who are homeless and unstably housed cannot wait. With city budget hearings before us, you have an opportunity now to take immediate action. Together, expanded parity goals, increased general fund contributions, and legislative strategies will enable us to live up to our values, and ensure that people of all backgrounds and incomes can afford to call our cities home.

Sincerely,

