



**HOUSING
DEVELOPMENT**
consortium

Mayor Durkan & City Council
City of Seattle
600 4th Ave
Seattle, WA 98102

Dear Mayor Durkan and Housing Committee Chair Mosqueda,

RE: Affordable Housing Construction Support Amid the COVID-19 Emergency

Thank you for your leadership in tackling COVID-19, one of the greatest public health challenges our city has ever faced and taking the necessary steps to mitigate its spread. As the situation unpredictably unfolds, we have learned of a shelter-in-place policy passed in the city of San Francisco and being considered by other cities. Out of the abundance of caution, we raise concerns to you about decisions made today that could have an acute impact on the production of affordable housing units in our city over the next few months and into next year.

HDC is a non-profit membership association representing 180 cross-sector, affordable housing developers, human service providers, public housing authorities, architects, general contractors and community-based organizations dedicated to the vision that all people should have a safe, healthy, and affordable home. Our members have been partners to the city, working on the front lines of the COVID-19 and housing crises in every part of our region. HDC supports the adherence to all guidelines about best practices to help deal with the Coronavirus. We also urge against policies that will delay delivery of much-needed housing units to our most vulnerable populations, in the case of a shelter-in-place order. As an association we know that the growing need for affordable housing calls for innovative strategies even during such tumultuous times to serve a diverse array of low-income populations.

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of Seattle-King County**

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Given our members' knowledge on construction and current observation of job site conditions, we know that with thorough planning on the part of our members in coordination with partners and local jurisdictions, construction of affordable housing can continue amid this difficult time to meet all project requirements. Affordable housing production is our only long-term housing strategy for the housing crisis that we were already grappling with before COVID-19. Housing production is one of the most important tools for economic stabilization: we ask that you offer resources to support construction work sites on ensuring safety protections for workers and options to work from home when needed or desired.

Our members are taking proactive steps, internally discussing alternative inspection methods that might involve design professionals to provide the quality control documentation required by the city. They will maintain best practices on site to protect the health and safety of all involved by enforcing social distancing, hygiene practices and ensuring sick workers and supervisors stay home. Therefore, we respectfully and urgently request the following:

1. Affordable housing construction continues in the case of a shelter-in-place order and the city provides support for public health and safety protocols to protect construction workers from infection.
2. Any currently permitted, active construction or pipeline project is supported to continue working toward meeting our city's housing need.

In addition, we also believe that halting market-rate housing construction would have a devastating impact and we encourage against any such mandate. We recognize that housing production of both market-rate and subsidized housing is a key element for increasing affordability and reducing displacement. Many individuals and families have been affected by the outbreak already and more will continue to be affected. The layers of the COVID-19 pandemic uncertainty and our growing housing need call on us to be more proactive in increasing our housing stock for people of all incomes, with strong support for those most vulnerable. We will be able to help communities and low-

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income families stay in their homes, if we recognize both market-rate and subsidized housing as key elements that fit as essential business during this crisis.

We also ask that you advocate to the State of Washington and King County for inclusion of affordable housing construction in “essential infrastructure” or other similar designation of activity that will be allowed to continue during any future “shelter in place” mandate, provided that such work can be performed safely and pursuant to necessary distancing protocols.

As an association, we are grateful for your bold leadership and commitment to ensuring that all people have access to safe, healthy and affordable homes, always. We look forward to working with you to keep affordable housing units in production at a scale that can help meet the growing community need.

Sincerely,

Marty Kooistra
Executive Director

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