April 15th, 2020

Bellevue City Council

Bellevue City Hall

450 110th Avenue NE

Bellevue, WA 98004

**RE: COVID 19 Urges Bold Action on Affordable Housing**

Dear Mayor Robinson & Bellevue Councilmembers,

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in extraordinary challenges for thousands of families and individuals across King County. Our thoughts and gratitude are with you and your colleagues who are leading local governments with decisive actions to meet the basic needs of constituents during this crisis. With the full economic and public health impact of COVID-19 largely unknown, we can draw logical conclusions that the **existing housing affordability crisis our region faces will be exacerbated**.

As a nonprofit member association representing over 180 organizations working within the affordable housing sector, HDC is fortunate to work alongside partners in the health and behavioral health fields to illuminate the connection between stable housing and positive health outcomes. This connection has been made even more salient as families and individuals do their best to “Stay Home, Stay Healthy”. The temporary changes to the OPMA issued by the Governor, and the inclusion of affordable housing as an “essential activity” are new realities the city of Bellevue is well equipped to respond to. Your leadership can ensure this public health emergency, and the preexisting housing affordability crisis do not become compounded.

To ease the immediate strain on affordable housing production and preservation in Bellevue, HDC members, partners and allies have developed a list of revenue neutral recommendations within the purview of city Leadership.

**We respectfully and urgently request the following:**

1. Restart Planning Commission meetings virtually per the guidance available in [Resolution 20-28](http://mrsc.org/getmedia/81ba5cd2-2db9-4f94-bd0b-287fea080f1f/w3p20-28opengov.aspx)
2. Implement tolling of all building permit applications for one year
3. Establish city-wide departure process for development standards in all zones
4. Extend Administrative Design Review approval
5. Create a temporary priority lane for affordable and workforce housing projects. Including:
6. SEPA exemption
7. Eliminate design review
8. Priority review of permits

Undoubtedly, the city of Bellevue is being asked to support many vital priorities at this time. One of our key concerns is the collapse of the affordable housing community, which would be disastrous for residents and further degrade the economy. At a time when staying home has become our primary public health mitigation approach, bold local actions are needed to ensure the affordable housing sector can continue to meet the growing need for homes that are affordable to households at or below 80% of AMI.

HDC remains an ardent & committed partner as we all navigate these new uncharted paths. Our members and staff are here to offer support as you continue to meet the needs of the people who call the vibrant city of Bellevue home.

With Gratitude,

Marty Kooistra Mallory Van Abbema

 

Executive Director Policy & Advocacy Manager