DRAFT Citizens Summary of Recommendations:
2017 Thurston County Assessment of Fair Housing Report
Fair Housing is Affordable Housing

2017	*DRAFT* Summary of Recommended Goals from the 2017 Thurston County Assessment of Fair Housing Report

*This "**Summary of Recommendations: 2017 Thurston County Assessment of Fair Housing Report"(AFH)**, also referred to as the **Regional Fair Housing Plan,** presents an overview of the primary contributing factors (barriers) and goals (recommendations) for fair housing choice in Thurston County. As required by federal regulation, the final report will guide the next Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Consolidated Plan (2018 -2022) to ensure that fair housing issues are included in the strategic planning of the investment of federal CDBG and HOME Program funds. This AFH Report is the product of an inter-jurisdictional collaboration between Thurston County, the Housing Authority of Thurston County and the City of Olympia.*

Overview – Fair Housing Choice Builds Strong Communities

Fair Housing Choice - - the right to choose one's home regardless of race, color, creed and other protected classes - - is not just a widely shared value, it's the law. Fair Housing choice fosters the creation of inclusive, diverse communities, which are the foundations of opportunity, economic and business success, and a strong thriving community. Where people live determines their access to opportunities—schools, jobs, transportation—and dictates many life outcomes. Existing research shows that a zip code can dictate educational trajectory, income, and even life expectancy. In short, fair housing choices builds strong communities.

The Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) Report

The purpose of the HUD required AFH Report is to provide goals or recommended actions to ensure that all households have access to homes they can afford, in neighborhoods they wish to live and in communities they want to be part of. This report is now required as preparatory for the multi-year strategy plan called the **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Consolidated Plan**, intended to ensure that the plan supports Fair Housing Choice.

This AFH Report was the outcome of a comprehensive analysis, which examined fair housing data and looked for patterns of racially concentrated areas of poverty and disproportionate housing needs. This assessment included a survey of key housing providers and other stakeholders called the *Key Stakeholder Questionnaire* (*29 respondents)* and a broad survey of County residents using the *Thurston County Assessment of Fair Housing* Survey (*1,060 respondents*). **Contributing Factors** *(barriers)* that impede fair housing choice were identified as part of this process, along with corresponding **Goals** *(recommendations*) to strategically address and mitigate the impediments to fair housing choice.

Primary Findings - Fair Housing in Thurston County

While Thurston County has **no HUD defined Racially / Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (R/ECAPS)**, the AFH research shows that there are concentrated areas of poverty and growing concentrations of racial and ethnic diversity, as well as higher than average levels of poverty among single mothers, female-headed households, people of color and people with disabilities. These protected classes are disproportionately impacted by rising rents and an overall lack of affordable and accessible housing. As a result, affordable housing becomes a fair housing issue.

This document serves as a summary to the main findings of the Assessment of Fair Housing, including a brief summary of the five (5) contributing factors identified during the research process, as well as the five (5) correlating goals and recommendations. Contributing factors and corresponding goals were identified through an examination of HUD provided data and maps, complaint records, U.S Census data, Thurston Regional Planning Council data, public comment and Thurston County Assessment of Fair Housing survey results.

The top 5 contributing factors (barriers) to fair housing choice in Thurston County identified were 1) lack of fair housing education by providers and consumers; 2) private discrimination of protected classes in rental housing; 3) lack of affordable housing; 4) source of income discrimination; and, 5) and restrictive land use and zoning laws. *(See next page*)

Fair Housing Goals & Contributing Factors Overview *(Brief summary of top recommendations and barriers to fair housing)*

5 Primary Fair Housing Choice Goals *(Recommendations)*	5 Primary Contributing Factors - Fair Housing Choice *(Barriers)*
1) Increase Fair Housing Education and Outreach • Educate Housing Providers (for-profit & non-profit) and Consumers • Educate Neighborhood Organizations • Create a central Fair Housing Information Link • Create regional Fair Housing coordination, partnership and trainings	**1) Lack of Fair Housing Education and Outreach** • Nonprofit providers, housing providers and consumers alike • No clear central location to find fair housing laws and rights • No clear instructions on how or where to file a complaint
2) Better Enforcement of Fair Housing Laws • Strengthen enforcement of state & federal laws • Create effective enforcement of Local laws • Track and evaluate local data on fair housing • Create Landlord licensing program: Rental Safety/Fair Housing education & enforcement	**2) Private Rental Discrimination** • Disability, family status and race are top 3 areas of complaint • Lack of understanding of where to file, or belief that filing a fair housing complaint will make a difference • No local mechanism to enforce the locally protected classes
3) Increase Affordable and Accessible Housing • Support the expansion of affordable and/or accessible housing • Maximize transportation-linked affordable housing • Increase affordable & accessible housing stock with development incentives	**3) Lack of Affordable, Accessible Housing** • Higher poverty rates among protected classes • Growing cost-burden among renters • Housing costs increased by transportation costs
4) Include Source of Income as a Protected Class Regionally • Enact countywide laws to protect "Source of Income" • Standardize "source of income" language across jurisdictions	**4) Source of Income Discrimination** • Number one self-reported basis of discrimination from nonprofit/housing providers and consumers • Inconsistent language between Olympia and Tumwater, both of which list "source of income" as a protected class
5) Incorporate Fair Housing Principles into Land Use Planning • Continued review & revision of zoning policy impacts on areas of poverty/racial concentrations • Review & revise development standards to increase affordable housing	**5) Restrictive Land Use and Zoning Laws** • Not enough mixed use neighborhoods, or diverse housing types allowed • Gentrification of high opportunity areas

Five (5) Contributing Factors to Fair Housing Choice

1. Lack of Fair Housing Education and Outreach

Fair Housing Education: The *Key Stakeholder Questionnaire,* sent out to nonprofits and private sector housing providers showed a surprising **lack of knowledge of how to file a complaint of fair housing discrimination, with 57% responding "no"** they did not know how. Increased education for providers was the number one recommendation from key stakeholders, with better enforcement of existing laws the second recommendation. Thurston County Assessment of Fair Housing survey respondents selected "Increased housing provider education of federal, state and local fair housing laws" and "Increased consumer education of federal, state and local fair housing laws" as their second and third choice recommendations, respectively.

Fair Housing Outreach: Of those who had experienced housing discrimination, **95% of survey respondents said they did not report the incident**; of those respondents, more than half either did not know where to report or did not believe it would make a difference. The same trend was seen in the *Key Stakeholder Questionnaire*, as nonprofit and housing providers reported that 88% of their clients did not report instances of discrimination, as most 'did not believe it would make a difference.'

2. Private Rental Discrimination

Private Rental Discrimination based on **disabilities** (including the refusal to allow reasonable accommodations and service animals), **family status** and **race** are the largest categories represented in HUD and Washington State Human Rights Commission complaint data, as well as self-reported discrimination in the Thurston County Assessment of Fair Housing survey.

More than 40 percent of all *HUD filed complaints* for Thurston County included disability as one of the bases, with family status at 26 percent and 19 percent because of race. Thurston County *Fair Housing survey data* reflects this trend: of all the protected classes, disability and family status were the top two basis of complaint, both at 34.5 percent, with race third at 31.5 percent. While **source of income is not a federal, state or county protected class,** it was the number one basis for complaints of housing discrimination in the Countywide survey, with 55% of respondents reporting they were denied housing because they used some form of rental subsidy.

The high number of fair housing complaints related to disability, family status and race could be caused by many factors, including more prevalent discrimination in these arenas, and more access to services and ability to file complaints. Fair housing studies have found that many apartment owners make direct comments refusing to make reasonable accommodations or modifications for people with disabilities, so discrimination is easier to detect. Conversely, fewer complaints regarding religion, gender, or other protected classes does not mean there is an absence of fair housing discrimination towards these and other protected classes. Instead, it could mean less access to services, fear of filing complaints, and other factors.

Of the more than 1,060 respondents to the Thurston County Fair Housing Survey, approximately

23 percent of respondents reported they have or think they have experienced housing discrimination; and approximately 24 percent know someone who has experienced housing discrimination, or think they may have. Overall, private rental discrimination is the top area of housing discrimination, with people selecting:

- Housing provider refused to rent or deal with a person, 58%;

- Falsely denied housing that was available, 38%; and

- Housing provider refused to make reasonable accommodations for disabilities, 25.5%

3. Lack of Affordable, Accessible Housing

Thurston County is experiencing an increase in demand for housing due to an influx of new residents. By some estimates, over 2,000 people are moving to Thurston County every year. Migration to Thurston County has increased from 758 new residents in 2010 to 4,239 new residents in 2015[1]. This current demand for housing is causing rapid rent increases. Gentrification caused by the high demand for housing in the region is causing displacement of low-income persons, including protected classes of residents due to economic pressures.

Renters: While Thurston County is 65% owner-occupied and 35% renter[2], the urban hub (*where 63% of the population lives, including the Urban Growth Areas),* is trending toward being predominantly renter households**.** Following is information about the percentage of renters by jurisdiction, taken from 2015 data from the American Community Survey update of 2010 Census data:

- **Olympia:**   **52%** renter occupied with a poverty rate of 18%
- **Lacey:**   **47%** renter occupied with a poverty rate of 10%
- **Tumwater:**   **45%** renter occupied with a poverty rate of 12%
- **Yelm (not urban hub):** **46%** renter occupied, with a 23% poverty rate
- **Thurston County:**   **35%** renter occupied with a poverty rate is 10%.

In terms of renter households, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) estimates that in Thurston County a person would need to earn $20.60 an hour to afford a fair market rent in a 2-bedroom apartment, with the average rent being $1,071. That is the equivalent of 1.9 full-time jobs at minimum wage. Countywide, the estimated hourly mean wage of renters is $13.71. At this wage, Thurston County renters could afford a monthly rent of $713.

Out of the approximately 100,766 total households in Thurston County, there are 19,270 low-income renter households[3]. If 35% of all households are renters, this would mean that approximately 55% of all renters are low-income in Thurston County (19,270 low-income renters is 55% of 35,268 total renter households).

Poverty rate of protected classes: HUD and census data shows that racially and ethnically diverse households in Thurston County, on average, have higher poverty rates than their white

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[1] Thurston Regional Planning Council, "The Profile: Components of Population Change"
[2] 2011-2015 American Community Survey
[3] National Low Income Housing Coalition, "Out of Reach 2017"

counterparts. Additionally, single mothers with children and people who are disabled also experience higher than average levels of poverty.

Estimated poverty rate for Thurston County Protected Classes (2010)[4]:

- 34% Single Mothers with Children
- 26% Female-headed household
- 24% Native American households
- 18% Hispanic/Latino households
- 16% with a Disability

- 14% black households
- 12% Asian American households
- 9% white, non-Hispanic households
- 5% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander households

The availability of affordable and/or multifamily housing located in high-amenity locations becomes a fair-housing concern. ***Affordable housing is a Fair Housing Choice issue.***

Need for More Housing along Transportation Arterials: Studies show that people who live or work in more accessible areas with transportation options have better access to goods, services, and activities, tend to own fewer vehicles, drive less, and rely more on alternative modes such as public transit. People who live in or around Thurston County's corridors and urban centers save an average of $3,000 to $4,000 in transportation costs per year[5]. The AAA 2015 estimate of car ownership and use is about $8,698 per car, per year (or $725 per month). Total housing cost takes into account the costs of transportation (*housing plus transportation equals true housing cost*).

Public Housing: The 2010 Housing Authority of Thurston County Annual Plan details the Section 8 tenant-based assistance Waiting List. At the time of that report, 455 families were active on the Section-8 housing voucher waiting list, with 25 new families served between 2008-2009. Of those on the waitlist, 89% of families (404 families) were extremely low-income households; 40% were families with children (184); and 54% were families with disabilities (245 families).

4. Source of Income Discrimination

Olympia and Tumwater include "source of income" as a protected class, yet neither Washington State nor Thurston County do. Nonprofit housing providers and social service providers from the Fair Housing Key Stakeholder Questionnaire identified "**source of income" as the number one basis of discrimination their clients encounter in Thurston County, at 88 percent.** One nonprofit organization reported encountering "at least 100 instances" in the past year of different people being turned away from local landlords and property managers due to their Section 8 vouchers.

Additionally, respondents from the Thurston County Assessment of Fair Housing Survey self-selected "source of income" as the number one basis for discrimination in Thurston County at 55%. The 2015 Washington State Analysis of Impediments recommends creating 'Source of Income as a protected class' among its set of statewide goals.

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[4] Thurston Regional Planning Council, "Fair Housing Equity Assessment of Thurston County" 2013
[5] Thurston Regional Planning Council, "Fair Housing Equity Assessment of Thurston County" 2013

While locally, both City of Olympia and City of Tumwater have a code specifying source of income as a protected class[6], there is not adequate enforcement of this law or understanding among housing providers and consumers. Additionally, the language between the two cities is not consistent, creating confusion among social service providers whether or not discrimination has occurred.

5. Restrictive Land Use and Zoning Laws

Land use and zoning laws can prevent multi-family and affordable housing units from being built in many areas where communities have been traditionally single-family homes. Communities have many ***development standards for multifamily housing*** including: amenities such as onsite parking, buildings that "match" the character of the neighborhood and traffic impact studies, etc. All of these requirements for multifamily housing projects increase the initial cost and result in housing that is expensive to build and maintain.

Multi-family zoning is also generally understood to be made up of apartment buildings. However, there are a broader range of development types that could provide more affordable dwelling units, such as providing for more than one housing unit per lot in a way that is compatible in scale with single-family homes. Examples may include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, accessory dwelling units, tiny homes, courtyard apartments, townhomes, row houses, and cottage housing.

Not Enough Mixed Use Zoning: The preference for single-family zoning also limits mixed-use development that offers multifamily units adjacent or nearby places to shop or work. Many income groups benefit from ***mixed use neighborhoods*** which tend to have greater options for travel (walking and transit), and often have a sense of place or community. Mixed use could mean mixes of housing types (duplexes, townhomes, single-family, apartments) as well as neighborhood commercial centers (places to gather and shop close to where people live).

Additionally, ***Development Impact or Mitigation Fees*** are collected in order to mitigate the fiscal impacts of growth on local jurisdictions. In some jurisdictions impact fees are collected to help pay for new roads, schools, or parks, and in others SEPA fees are collected to mitigate for environmental impacts. However, the impacts of growth on government infrastructure and facilities can vary. Fees that are applied per housing unit without taking into account factors that affect household size or access to alternative transportation may favor fewer, more expensive units over smaller, affordable units.[7]

While local Comprehensive Plans describe housing goals, there are very ***few incentives*** offered to encourage development of the full range of housing necessary to meet the needs of the community. Incentives are needed to promote housing goals. These could include density bonuses or permit discounts based on transportation access. Additionally, ***regulations on development are inconsistent between jurisdictions***, causing confusion for developers when dealing with different development styles and patterns.

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[6] Tumwater "Unfair Housing Ordinance 5.70.010" and Olympia "Unfair Housing Ordinance 5.80.010"
[7] Thurston Regional Planning Council, "Sustainable Thurston Plan" of Thurston County" 2013

Five (5) Goals and Recommendations for Fair Housing Choice

1. **Increase Fair Housing Education and Outreach**

    1a. Housing Provider Education: Increase public education of Fair Housing laws for housing providers, including property owners and landlords, rental agencies, real estate and nonprofits. Develop regional partnerships for trainings and workshops, including what the protected classes are, and how to file a complaint. Explore a broad range of education tools, including flyers, online resources, professional organization newsletters, and other means.

    1b. ***Housing Consumer Education***: Increase public education of Fair Housing laws for consumers. Develop partnerships to provide regional trainings and workshops, including topics such as what the protected classes are, and what the process is for filing a complaint. Explore a broad range of education tools, including flyers, online resources, neighborhood organization newsletters, and other means.

    1c. ***Neighborhood Organization Education***: Encourage education and dialogue on affordable housing, rental housing, housing density, and fair housing choice as they impact neighborhood organization goals; engage neighborhood groups before the formal public hearing process for rezones.

    1d. ***Central Fair Housing Info Link:*** Create a singular web-based "*fair housing information*" site, with an accessible link from all city jurisdiction websites. List all federal, state and local protected classes, and information on how to file a discrimination complaint, and places to get training on fair housing laws.

2. **Better Enforcement of Fair Housing Laws**

    2a. Enhanced Enforcement of State Laws: Strengthen existing capacity for enforcement process of state fair housing laws.

    2b. ***Enhanced Enforcement of Local Laws:*** Develop effective means of enforcement process of local fair housing laws.

    2c. Track Local Data on Fair Housing: Develop internal mechanisms to continue evaluating fair housing on a local level, and including the community's affordable housing needs, goals and mechanisms.

    2d. ***Rental Safety Program/ Landlord licensing:*** Consider existing Washington State landlord licensure program models (*Bellingham, Lakewood, Pasco, and Tukwila*) to monitor and regulate safe, decent and sanitary housing, as well as to require fair housing compliance for locally protected classes, i.e. disability, family status, race and possibly source of income.

3. **Increase Affordable and Accessible Housing**

   3a. Increase Affordable Housing Inventory: Provide support for for-profit and non-profit efforts to develop new housing units with long-term affordability for a broad range of low-income households, with an emphasis on dispersal of affordable housing throughout the county. Consider a Countywide Strategic Housing Plan to coordinate fair housing goals across jurisdictions.

   3b. Increase Accessible Housing Inventory: Increase accessibility to affordable housing for persons with disabilities and single parent familial status households. This might include incentives, goals and other public policies to encourage the production of new ADA accessible units, and/or the ADA accessible retrofit of existing units.

   3c. Maximize transportation linked housing: Encourage more housing to be located near shops and services and along transportation corridors that offer multiple modes of transportation. Encourage public transportation access to expanded geographic areas of affordable housing, with particular emphasis on ADA accessible housing (*housing plus transportation equals housing costs).*

4. **Source of Income as a Protected Class**

   4a. Countywide Laws to Protect Source of Income: Include "Source of Income" as a protected class countywide (*currently protected by Olympia and Tumwater, and recommended by Washington State Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice 2015*).

   4b. Standardize Language: Standardize language regarding all locally protected classes across Thurston County to ensure consistent public policy across Thurston County.

5. **Incorporate Fair Housing Principles into Land Use Planning**

   5a. Review Zoning Impacts on Fair Housing: Encourage City jurisdictions to review local zoning maps and overlay with HUD maps of poverty and racial concentrations (*both of which are provided in the AFH report*) with regard to zoning impacts on fair and affordable housing choice; analyze location and type of housing to identify zoning impediments.

   5b. Review Development Standards Impact on Fair Housing: Review development regulations to encourage mixed housing type zoning across the urban jurisdictions. Make strategic investments to encourage mixed-use neighborhoods: this could mean mixes of housing types (*duplexes, townhomes, single-family, apartments*) as well as neighborhood commercial centers (*places for people to gather and shop close to where they live*.)

   5c. Foster Affordable Housing Incentives: Consider incentives to promote affordable and accessible housing developments. Examples include: density bonuses or permit discounts based on transportation access; deferred impact fees; use public and private dollars to buy down development and impact fees; revise density bonus and zoning for cluster housing.

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