
Skagit Housing Consortium Goals and Work Plan: Coming Together to Identify Opportunities and Obstacles in Order to Problem Solve

Draft ~~February 10~~ May 17, 2022

Draft Mission: to ensure housing is available, affordable, and of sufficient quality for all income levels in Skagit County across the continuum of needs by encouraging all governments, non-profits, private businesses, and religious organizations to collaborate and support housing delivery and maintenance processes including leveraging resources, building local capacity, harmonizing regulations, and educating the public.

Draft Vision: Our vision is the same as other leaders to see a healthy community that is able to meet the basic need of housing for the residents it serves. Where people who work in Skagit County can live in Skagit County. Where our families can expand and remain in the county that they were raised in because they can afford the housing that is available. Where housing supports economic development rather than limiting it.

Need Statement:

Skagit County and its urban centers experience some of the lowest availability and affordability of residential units in the state; lags in availability versus need by several thousand affordable units; has a documented housing mismatch with its population; and, like most of Western Washington, experiences multiple barriers to the creation and development of housing to the point that it is one of the primary limitations for economic development, job creation, and public health in Skagit County.

There is currently no regular gathering or coordinated and facilitated conversations among the service providers, developers, supporters, planners and regulators for affordable housing provision. The County and others have done significant assessment work and hosting of housing forums in the past that provide a basis of understanding the range of problems and solutions available to us. There is a growing need and significant interest in prioritizing solutions to this crisis that are inclusive to the many needs of families, individuals, seniors, workers and all residents and employees that are a part of the Skagit Valley Community.

This requires the support and input of those working across housing development, housing services, funding streams, city and county, business owners, residence and non-residence to have a space where they can come together, be heard, bring resources and ideas so that solutions can be offered. We are only as strong as our community combined.

Draft Values

- Innovative and Solution Driven: We want to be action oriented and leading the way.
- Inclusive: ~~Open to hear all needs~~ Putting all voices forward equitably
- Supportive: We are looking to further support those in our community that are/or want to be working and supporting the creation of more affordable housing in Skagit County. No finger pointing.
- Educational: seeking solutions by bringing ideas from across communities, professions etc. to learn ways to support the increase of housing options and affordability.
- Adding value and increasing pace of progress

Longer Term Goals (work in progress)

- The overall goal is to address the crisis of availability and affordability in residential housing stock in Skagit County across the continuum of needs. We do this by:
- Growing connections, networking, cross-organizational learning and sharing of innovative practices. This should be a place to “plug in” for those interested or with expertise in affordable housing development.
- Collecting, sharing and disseminating research, planning, and relevant organizational models for provision of affordable housing.
- Aligning across efforts, for maximum impact of individual efforts and across the continuum of need and projects. Helping complete projects and operationalize policy.
- Celebrating and promoting our successes and building a sense of teamwork and momentum on this complex issue.
- Honing our collective housing strategy via structured assessment and learning.
- Communicating for effective outreach and advocacy at the state and local levels where we can develop consensus.
- Expanding training and education opportunities at all relevant levels.

Draft 2022 Goals for Skagit Housing Consortium’s Work Plan/Deliverables

A portion of these 2022 goals can be accomplished with membership dues and volunteerism, while others are included that will likely require additional time and money but can be started in 2022. Next steps are to flesh out SMART objectives and staffing assignments.

Structural and Financial

- Successful fiscal sponsorship with EDASC in 2022
- Incorporate Consortium Q1 2022; develop initial and long-term Board of Directors; apply for and gain non-profit status by end of 2022
- Membership solidified and membership dues process in place; make dues match projected total need, which still needs to be calculated
- Identify potential contractors to direct Consortium as part-time task (non-employee)
- Seek additional funding to expand operations, including relationships with governments and foundations

Programmatic (Assessment, Advocacy)

- Support the delivery of HB1590 programs in a coordinated fashion across the county
- Develop a consortium public policy agenda **that addresses housing barriers** across the housing spectrum
- ~~Put specific focus on farm workers/migrant community for immediate housing solutions, with sensitivity to cultural, linguistic, and technological barriers~~
- ~~Proactively engage in public planning to support safe parking for property allocated for transient R/V parking.~~
- ~~Increase pace of planning for & constructing future market rate and subsidized housing~~
- Identify and clarify the reasons why Skagit has the lowest vacancy of any county in the state of WA. (Once identified, the longer term goal would be to move up this list.)
- **Incorporate minority, marginalized, vulnerable and isolated communities in an equitable assessment, for example farmworkers**

Pipeline and Financing

- Support in pre pre-development of new housing. Identify possible new projects. Supporting the collaboration of information for County/City projects.
- Identify **and attract other locally controlled local, state, federal and private** funding sources ~~this group might provide guidance for in terms of most strategic investment to meet our housing development goals~~

Education

- At least 4 education sessions a year based on following goals
 - Educational and advocacy sharing within group – also connect local organizations/governments with strong lobbying efforts (e.g., YMCA, Habitat, Community Action, Skagit County) with statewide lobbying efforts for better coordination
 - state legislation and capital budgets
 - funding opportunities for capacity of local jurisdictions, non profit planning, land use planning. How to start a project, fund a project and overcome coding and policy issues.
 - land use and housing code and policy
 - Find way to engage/give voice to utilizing constituency and under-served communities
- Growing, engaging and communicating in new ways (e.g. email listserv) to build stronger support including non-English speakers and those lacking internet access
 - collaborative messaging with inclusive language choices
 - Possible Speaker's Bureau to expand reach
 - create survey to reach broader community and encourage respondents to engage in actively addressing the project

- community collaboration and bridging gaps “yes in our backyard”
- Recorded presentations available live and online
- Notification of land use and regulatory update processes and comment periods
- Build a best practices library to learn from successful projects
 - Develop a template for project reporting, documenting outcomes

Data and Adaptive Management

- Complete housing inventory of local housing projects current and underway
- Create comprehensive list of funding resources (funders, due dates, applications, etc.)
- Create year-end report on consortium efficacy and results (possible white paper that evaluates intention vs. outcome or delivery) including projects supported by Consortium
- ~~Encourage and track partnerships and partnership projects that result from the Consortium.~~

Who might participate?

- Overall, participants should include anyone doing or supporting residential development projects in Skagit County and its urban areas, including but not limited to:
 - Governmental housing and planning staff.
 - Non-governmental housing service providers.
 - Nonprofit and for profit housing developers.
 - Residential and commercial realtors and other economic development interests.
 - Individual investors and foundations that are affordable housing supporters and advocates.
 - Decision makers and elected officials.