



Breaking New Ground

OREGON'S STATEWIDE HOUSING PLAN

SUMMARY



Across Oregon, housing has emerged as a paramount concern. The lack of available housing, high rents and high home prices are driving rapid increases in housing instability and homelessness. The data is clear: too many Oregonians are without a safe, stable and affordable place to call home.

As we embarked on this Statewide Housing Plan in 2017, we traveled throughout Oregon on a listening tour, which brought us to communities large and small — coastal villages, Central Oregon boomtowns, Eastern Oregon wheat country, and growing Portland area suburbs. In each community, the housing crisis loomed large. You told us the heartbreaking stories of your friends, neighbors and family members who are struggling to find a pathway out of poverty; you described the homeless youth in your city that line up around the block hoping for shelter each night; you shared the fear of speaking out about mold and dirty water in your homes; and you talked about the business in the next town that had to cut jobs because there is nowhere for employees to live. We heard about the impacts this housing instability is having on our school children, the medically fragile, elders, communities of color and the workforce.

Across the state, we also heard inspirational stories that demonstrate our communities' resolve and desire to bring about change. We have unprecedented engagement and leadership on housing issues from our elected officials in Salem and at the local level. Oregon Housing and Community Services is ready to match that resolve and engagement. At the date of this letter, we have a record number of homes — nearly 8,000 — in our affordable housing development pipeline. We are serving more people through our homeless programs than ever before, and we are in the midst of another banner year for first time homebuyers. Yet more is needed. The people we serve will stand front and center as we drive to solutions through national best practices, increased impact, partnership and innovation.

This Statewide Housing Plan is our road map as we embark upon a series of bold initiatives to realize this vision over the next five years. I encourage you to join us in this endeavor to lay the foundation for a new era of hope and opportunity for our communities. For one individual, for one family at a time, we can end homelessness. We can end housing instability. We can create a system that advances equity and eliminates disparities for people of color. And we can create an Oregon where we all have the opportunity to pursue prosperity and live free from poverty.



Sincerely,
Margaret Salazar, *Director*

Together, we can make Oregon a place where every child has a safe and stable place to call home.



Plan Purpose

The **Statewide Housing Plan** articulates how Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) will pave the way for more Oregonians to have access to the stable housing opportunities necessary for **self-sufficiency**. To do this, the Plan...

- Draws on quantitative and qualitative data to illuminate areas of need across the state and within specific communities;
- Communicates **six priorities** to build support and inspire coordinated action;
- Describes how OHCS will lead, fund, and support our partners on priority issues over the next five years; and
- Provides a framework and direction for OHCS to prepare annual work plans, set goals, monitor progress and implement our priorities.

The Plan marks a new way of doing business for OHCS. It lays the foundation for OHCS to be a data- and research-driven organization, and proposes a new way of collaborating and focusing resources and energy to address the most pressing housing issues facing Oregon today.

Guiding Principles

The **guiding principles** set direction for OHCS over the five-year plan horizon and beyond, building on our mission statement, vision and core values. They are crosscutting philosophies that inform how we will approach our work and guide our decisions over the next five-plus years across the department's many programs.



PRIORITY

Equity and Racial Justice

Advance equity and racial justice by identifying and addressing institutional and systemic barriers that have created and perpetuated patterns of disparity in housing and economic prosperity.



People of color have long faced discrimination and inequity in housing, home loans and government services. African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and others face persistent poverty and wage gaps that force families to spend a greater share of their incomes on rent, leading to housing insecurity and a higher risk of homelessness. In addition, ongoing discrimination in the housing market combined with systemic barriers to economic mobility, wealth creation and opportunities impede progress toward parity. We are committed to an intentional, data-driven approach in collaboration with our partners to reduce disparities in housing and social service provision and to achieve greater parity in housing stability, self-sufficiency and homeownership for communities of color.



PRIORITY

Homelessness

Build a coordinated and concerted statewide effort to prevent and end homelessness, with a focus on ending unsheltered homelessness of Oregon's children and veterans.

All available data suggests that homelessness has increased during the current housing crisis, likely driven by increasing rents, which compound personal and societal causes of homelessness. Homelessness and housing instability make it harder to find and keep a job, treat or manage medical conditions, and learn in school. Ending homelessness means that every community has a comprehensive system in place to prevent homelessness, and where it can't be prevented, ensure it is a brief, one-time experience. There is substantial momentum around ending homelessness, particularly for veterans and children. OHCS will focus services and resources to drive improvement in housing stability and collaborate with partners to end veterans' homelessness in Oregon and build a system in which every child has a safe and stable place to call home.

PRIORITY

Permanent Supportive Housing

Invest in permanent supportive housing, a proven strategy to reduce chronic homelessness and reduce barriers to housing stability.



Permanent supportive housing is a proven model for successfully housing economically vulnerable people who may not otherwise be able to maintain stable housing. Permanent supportive housing combines housing affordable at extremely low incomes with wraparound supportive services. A wide body of evidence supports the use of permanent supportive housing to provide better outcomes for people and reduce costs for health care, criminal justice, emergency services and other public systems. OHCS has heard resounding support for the permanent supportive housing model from local governments and partners. OHCS will increase our commitment to permanent supportive housing by working with partners to align resources for, and eliminate barriers to, producing permanent supportive housing.



PRIORITY

Affordable Rental Housing

Work to close the affordable rental housing gap and reduce housing cost burden for low-income Oregonians.

Many studies have shown that access to affordable housing has broad, positive impacts. Affordable housing increases financial stability and allows families to prioritize spending on what matters most, including food, transportation, healthcare and saving for college or retirement. In recent years, OHCS and its affordable housing development partners responded to an ongoing housing crisis with record production of new units. Still, rents and housing prices continue to rise relative to incomes, increasing levels of housing cost burden, while low vacancy rates make it difficult to find housing. OHCS will work with our partners to expand and expedite delivery of affordable rental housing, reduce housing cost burden for low-income renters, and preserve existing affordable housing units.

PRIORITY

Homeownership

Provide more low- and moderate-income Oregonians with the tools to successfully achieve and maintain homeownership, particularly in communities of color.



Affordable homeownership is a critical component of any forward-thinking strategy that seeks to address both housing and prosperity. In markets with rising home prices, fixed home payments insulate homeowners from displacement pressures. Homeownership provides an avenue to build wealth and home equity that can support college education, business start-up, or other financial needs. Across the income spectrum, communities of color have lower homeownership rates than whites due to historical and ongoing discriminatory lending and disparate access to home financing. OHCS will expand the reach of existing homeownership programs for low- and moderate-income households and explore innovative new programs to address unmet needs in the marketplace. We will also increase the number of homebuyers of color in our homeownership programs through engagement with culturally responsive organizations and intentional program design.



PRIORITY

Rural Communities

Change the way OHCS does business in small towns and rural communities to be responsive to the unique housing and service needs and unlock the opportunities for housing development.

Small towns and rural communities face distinct housing and service provision challenges. While housing costs may be lower, incomes are lower as well, and transportation costs can be significantly higher. There has been little new housing, especially multifamily housing, built in rural areas in the last decade. Issues include lack of suitable and available land, high labor costs to bring contractors to rural areas, rents and home prices too low to cover the cost of new construction, and lack of financing for smaller-scale projects. OHCS will collaborate with small towns and rural communities to increase housing development; tailor services to rural areas' unique needs; and build stronger partnerships among housing and service providers, private industry, employers, local governments, philanthropy and other stakeholders to improve capacity and leverage resources.



Working together to serve individuals, families and communities throughout Oregon

Equal Opportunity Housing and Equal Opportunity Employment

Oregon Housing and Community Services is committed to providing meaningful access. For accommodations, modifications, translation, interpretation or other services, please contact **Greg Current** at **503-986-2000**, by **TTY** at **503-986- 2100**, or by email at **greg.current@oregon.gov**.

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