



HALA Endorsement

Executive Summary

- To equitably meet the needs of our rapidly changing city, Seattle must rethink its housing policies at all levels of affordability, invent new models for housing at all scales, and publicly invest in housing for those most at risk of displacement.
- Increased housing supply must go hand in hand with a vision of vibrant, well-designed and livable city, including investments in community amenities, services and transit, and we support increased density as a means of achieving both of these goals.
- AIA Seattle endorses HALA as a comprehensive and timely response to the city's housing crisis. HALA provides the framework and the opportunity to have conversations about how density should happen, not if. It also provides AIA Seattle with an opportunity to identify our housing and urban design priorities while inserting quality design principles into Seattle's ongoing housing conversation.
- As part of our work on these issues, AIA Seattle's Public Policy Board will establish a Housing Task Force to help provide meaningful feedback to the city and to pair our priorities with specific policy actions.

Issue

Seattle is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. The city's population is projected to increase by 120,000 in the next twenty years with an additional 50,000 units of housing needed in the next ten.

Land area for close-in housing is limited by Seattle's physical geography and more than half of the city's developable land is currently zoned for single-family dwellings. This limited supply, coupled with sky-rocketing demand, creates housing scarcity, inflates land and housing prices and limits the city's ability to accommodate the diversity of families and individuals that want to remain here or move to our city. Housing affordable to people at low or lower-middle incomes is particularly limited. Seattle has one of the largest homeless populations in the United States, and King County has the third-largest concentration of homeless people in the country.

HALA strives to create 50,000 homes by 2025, including 20,000 affordable homes. The development of both affordable housing and market-rate housing is an important strategy for slowing housing cost increases and providing a wider range of housing choices.

To equitably meet the needs of our rapidly changing city, Seattle must rethink its housing policies at all levels of affordability, invent new models for housing at all scales, and publicly invest in housing for those most at risk of displacement. Increased housing supply

must go hand in hand with a vision of vibrant, well-designed and livable city and we endorse increased density as a means of achieving both of these goals. The quality of housing options and investment in community amenities, services and transit are critical if Seattle is to remain a great and welcoming place to live for all.

Current Status

To date, the following HALA provisions have been implemented:

- Support for renters: the city strengthened laws that protect renters from sub-standard housing and discrimination based on how they pay their rent.
- Seattle Housing Levy: in 2016, Seattle voters approved a doubling of the city's property-tax levy for low-income housing.
- Multifamily tax exemption expansion: the city expanded the reach of this program to allow new buildings to include rent- and income-restricted homes in more neighborhoods.
- Mandatory Housing Affordability: MHA was implemented in the University District, Downtown, South Lake Union, Chinatown-International District, along 23rd Ave in the Central Area and Uptown, and the city is proposing to implement MHA citywide beginning in 2018.
- Design Review improvements: the city enacted Design Review legislation in 2017 intended to improve the overall function of the program.

Endorsement

AIA Seattle endorses Seattle's Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) as a bold, aspirational, comprehensive and timely response to the issue of housing affordability outlined above. In order to accommodate growth and to do it in a more equitable manner, Seattle must become a denser city. HALA provides the framework and the opportunity to have conversations about how that density should happen, not if. It also provides AIA Seattle with an opportunity to identify our housing and urban design priorities while inserting quality design principles into Seattle's ongoing housing conversation. Accordingly, our priorities for achieving density and increasing the affordability and availability of all housing types include:

- Support streamlined processes to make it easier and more affordable to build all types of housing.
- Ensure that a variety of affordable housing types are created including larger units for families with children.
- Identify additional ownership or other structures that can positively impact "missing middle" housing stock and overall housing affordability – including ADUs/DADUs, courtyard housing, duplexes and triplexes and townhouses.

- Promote creative ways to finance housing of all types, especially additional housing on single-family lots.
- Support policies that encourage the uniqueness, character and livability of each neighborhood even as new residents are moving in. We understand that retaining character does not mean no growth; our neighborhoods will change.
- Encourage policies that positively impact carbon emissions by providing housing close to jobs, thus reducing the transportation-related causes of climate change.
- Champion housing policies that lead to increased equity between income groups and among all races with the understanding that Seattle must compensate for the fact that many communities of color have historically been kept out of our single-family neighborhoods.
- Ensure that concurrency, or the underlying infrastructure and amenities needed to support the city's quality of life as it grows, keeps pace with development throughout the city. This includes parks and open space, schools, access to transportation alternatives and the like.
- Recognize the power of good design to enhance the quality of the city's urban fabric, neighborhoods and public realm.

Involvement

AIA Seattle embraces a vision of Seattle as an equitable, livable and sustainable city for all of its citizens. We are committed to the goals outlined in HALA, qualified to assist the city and its citizens navigate their complexities and stand ready to offer our professional skills and expertise through engagement, education and facilitation. While the city faces daunting challenges, we believe that Seattle can grow in a more equitable, environmentally sensible way that leads to a strong sense of place and enhanced livability. We strive to convey this optimism through advocacy and action.

As part of our work on these issues, AIA Seattle's Public Policy Board will establish an Urban Housing Task Force dedicated solely to addressing Seattle policies related to its affordable housing crisis. To help provide meaningful feedback to the city and to pair our priorities with specific actions, the Task Force will work to identify detailed policy components to address the housing and density goals outlined herein.



Positions on key HALA components

Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)

Seattle's MHA policy is designed to ensure that growth brings affordability by requiring new commercial and multifamily residential development to contribute to affordable housing. MHA requires new development to include affordable homes or contribute to a city fund for affordable housing. To put MHA into effect, the city will make zoning changes that add development capacity and expand housing choices. The city estimates that MHA will provide at least 6,000 new rent-restricted, income-restricted homes for low-income people.

After putting MHA in place in six Seattle neighborhoods in 2017 (University District, Downtown, South Lake Union, Chinatown-International District, along 23rd Ave in the Central Area, and Uptown), the city is proposing to implement MHA citywide beginning in 2018. This proposal – called Citywide MHA Implementation – will rezone (and in some cases expand) urban villages throughout Seattle. Other areas in the city that currently allow commercial or multifamily development will be subject to rezoning. These rezones will ensure that, as Seattle grows, the city is able to create new rent-restricted homes for low-income households that might otherwise be priced out of the city.

Seattle's Urban Village Strategy has been in place since 1994. It identifies 30 communities where the City directs public investments in community assets such as transit and parks and where most of Seattle's future population and job growth will be accommodated. Less intensive changes are proposed in areas with higher risk of displacement, environmentally sensitive areas and areas with fewer community assets.

Following the city's release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Citywide MHA Implementation in late 2017, a neighborhood group filed an appeal with the city Hearing Examiner. AIA Seattle will closely monitor the appeal process as it moves forward.

Endorsement

AIA Seattle endorses the MHA process as critical to ensuring that the city's growth and the growth of its affordable housing options go hand in hand. We support efforts to require developers to contribute to affordable housing while the city focuses on equitable development – adding housing development in communities where existing residents are less vulnerable to displacement and where there are more assets to provide for a growing population, like parks and transit. MHA addresses AIA Seattle's goals of increasing housing supply while addressing the quality of Seattle's housing options and providing nearby urban amenities.

As architects, we are strongly rooted in urban design principles and our desire to make Seattle a vibrant, healthy and equitable place to live. As such, we look forward to working with the city and others to improve the MHA over time. Specific interests include:

- Determining if the affordable housing rates required of developers should be adjusted in the future;
- Ensuring good design principles are used in the development of affordable housing projects;
- Identifying urban amenities that Seattle must invest in alongside affordable housing; and
- Evaluating displacement trends over time.

Reduce Barriers to ADUs and DADUs

The city has identified the need for more housing at prices accessible to people at all levels of income, both for homeowners and renters. It has also identified single-family neighborhoods as places where increased density can be achieved by making it easier for homeowners to build accessory dwelling units (ADUs) or detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs) in their backyards. In March 2017, Councilmember Mike O'Brien proposed a series of changes to make it more feasible for homeowners to build these units. Following the release, the Queen Anne Community Council appealed to the hearing examiner, challenging the City's SEPA determination of non-significance. The Hearing Examiner subsequently reversed her determination, after which the city agreed to pursue a full EIS. AIA Seattle and many AIA members commented on the EIS scope in November 2017. The EIS is expected to be completed by mid-2018, at which time city legislation will be reintroduced.

Endorsement

AIA Seattle supports the intent of the original O'Brien legislation and maintains that Seattle must make the creation of new housing units easier and more affordable in all areas of the city. We believe we can maintain uniqueness and character in our neighborhoods through creative policies and good design – but with the understanding that neighborhoods will change as they densify. AIA Seattle believes this is a good thing. We support measures to make building ADUs and DADUs easier for homeowners, from reduced regulatory requirements to creative ways to finance projects, and we will promote rules that allow architects to utilize the best possible design for each project.

Although we expect to request some changes to the final ADU/DADU legislation in the pursuit of these goals, the original O'Brien proposal is an excellent jumping off point. We look forward to working with the city to craft a final proposal that will help to provide a greater range of housing options and prices throughout the city.

