South Sound Housing Affordability Partners

2023 Year in Review

www.SouthSoundAffordableHousing.org

SSHĀ³P

About SSHA^{3}P

Established in 2021, the South Sound Housing Affordability Partners (SSHA^{3}P) is an intergovernmental collaboration between the Cities and Towns of Auburn, DuPont, Edgewood, Fife, Fircrest, Gig Harbor, Lakewood, Milton, Puyallup, Sumner, Steilacoom, Tacoma, and University Place, Pierce County and the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, working together to create and preserve affordable, attainable, and accessible housing throughout our communities.

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Affordable Housing Development

A roof over your head is one of the most basic needs you must meet for health and stability. Creating and preserving homes, with an emphasis on affordability, is a key priority for SSHA P and a challenge in a real estate market that continues its upward climb.

SSHA^{3}P has an established common goal to ensure the availability of housing that meets the needs of residents and workers at all income levels in Pierce County, and to complement the efforts of local government and existing public and private organizations to address housing needs in Pierce County.

- In December, the SSHA^{3}P Executive Board took action to create the SSHA^{3}P Housing Capital Fund. This fund, with initial collaboration between the cities of Auburn, Fife, Sumner, and Pierce County, will be used to accelerate affordable housing development and leverage additional local, state, and federal funds.

- In early 2023, SSHA^{3}P staff identified a property owned by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in unincorporated Pierce County that showed potential for moderate residential development. SSHA^{3}P facilitated meetings between DNR and Pierce County staff regarding potential acquisition, and in early 2024 Pierce County will acquire this property for the future development of 24-40 affordable housing units.

Housing Policy and Planning

- The City of Fife adopted the 12-year multi-family property tax exemption (MFTE) program, with strong SSHA^{3}P staff support, including the drafting of code amendments and enacting legislation, as well as facilitating a financial feasibility analysis on the program.

- Through a grant from the Department of Commerce and in collaboration with 5 member cities, SSHA^{3}P contracted BERK Consulting to conduct research and create policy recommendations related to middle housing and racial equity. SSHA^{3}P staff summarized the findings by identifying regionally applicable policy recommendations.

- In February, SSHA^{3}P adopted the first policy items for the Housing Toolkit, which included recommendations that eligible SSHA^{3}P member governments consider the usage of SEPA Urban Infill and Categorical Exemptions to streamline the development of certain types of housing, and later in the year saw the City of University Place take action to increase its SEPA categorical exemption thresholds.

- SSHA^{3}P staff supported member governments in completing their Comprehensive Plan periodic updates by supporting community engagement efforts, providing feedback on draft goals and policies, and facilitating conversation and collaboration amongst planners across Pierce County. SSHA^{3}P also created an online resource to provide a one-stop-shop for member government staff to access materials to support their Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update work.

Housing Planning and Policy

- SSHA^{3}P staff supported the City of Fircrest's application to the Department of Commerce's middle housing grant, which was awarded.

- During the 2024 State Legislative Session, SSHA^{3}P staff worked to advance capital budget funding for member government priority projects, with 3 of 4 projects funded, and more than $20 million directly appropriated to support affordable housing development in Pierce County. SSHA^{3}P staff also worked with the Legislature to increase local government capacity to provide funds for affordable housing and services through SB 5604. To ensure transparency and accountability, SSHA^{3}P staff developed and distributed weekly hot sheets on legislative activity.

Education and Outreach

- SSHA^{3}P staff collaborated with the Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer's Office, Pierce County Human Services, and other community service providers to hold a series of six property tax exemption seminars around the county where low-income seniors and people with disabilities were able to learn about the exemptions and other community resources. These seminars resulted in the group receiving the prestigious Pierce County Standing Ovation Award, which recognizes excellence in effective government service.

- SSHA^{3}P staff created graphics for each member jurisdiction illustrating data on housing attainability. These graphics are posted to SSHA^{3}P's website and can be used by members for educational purposes.

Administration and Governance

SSHA^{3}P established its Advisory Board and appointed 19 community members to support the Executive Board's work with subject matter expertise and lived experience.

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