

10/25/16

Dear Members of the Seattle City Council:

We, the undersigned faith leaders, communities of faith, and local residents, urge the Council to invest \$160 million in the city's 2017 capital budget to build low-income, affordable housing for working families.

Today there is a dire and growing shortage of housing units available for Seattle residents who are struggling economically, the people who most need them. Tackling this crisis in the 2017 City budget is not just a matter of balancing competing interests for smart growth. It needs to be rooted in recognizing the dignity of all Seattle residents and prioritizing a commitment to a sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all.

As you well know, people in Seattle are facing an affordable housing crisis. In the last year, Seattle rents have gone up at more than three times the national rate. An average two-bedroom apartment in our city is now almost \$2,400. The median home price is nearly \$600,000. These escalating prices are driving working people, young adults, students, people of color, and immigrants out of our city, nullifying our hard-fought pay gains and forcing people to endure longer commutes and spend less time with their loved ones.

Lack of affordable housing is threatening the fabric of the economic diversity of our community and exacerbating the crisis of homelessness. Many members of our faith communities who are dedicated to and love this city are being squeezed out of the region. As people of faith, we are united in declaring that the lack of affordable housing cries out for humane, compassionate remedies and smart policy decisions by City leaders.

By allocating \$160 million to build and operate 1,000 affordable rental units, the City will be saving 1,000 individuals and families from having to move elsewhere – probably outside of Seattle – and will help improve the overall housing market for lower-income people. We are pleased to learn that with the shelving of plans for a new police precinct building, the City now has available bonding capacity and cash to make this allocation in the 2017 capital budget.

We are united and determined to see the City build more housing to alleviate this growing crisis. Housing affordability is a core issue for faith communities.

Please let us know whether we can count on you, as an elected representative, to join with us in making 1,000 new homes a priority in the 2017 City budget.

Sincerely,