



Olympia Renter Solutions Study LUEC Briefing - December 16, 2021



Renter Solutions Briefing Topics

1. What We Have Learned So Far
2. What Olympia is Doing to Address Housing Needs
3. Rental Market Stabilization Concepts
4. Focus Groups Structure and Discussion

Context

- Thurston housing prices at all-time high and rising
- Renter capacity eroded by rapid inflation, mild wage growth
- COVID = single largest job loss in modern history
- Many not able to return to work/have not closed income gap
- COVID-based rent relief may be helpful with initial triage

Current Challenges

- Recent Rent Increases
- High Move-In Fees
- Barriers to Entry
- Rental Stock Condition
- Access to Resources
- Potential Solutions Limited (e.g., Rent Control not allowed)

What Olympia is Doing to Address Housing Needs

1. Increase the supply of permanent, income-restricted affordable housing.
2. Make it easier for households to access housing and stay housed.
3. Expand housing supply by making it easier to build all types of housing projects.
4. Increase the variety of housing choices.
5. Build resources, collaboration, understanding to improve implementation.
6. Establish a permanent source of funding for low-income housing.

Rental Market Stabilization Concepts

- Landlord Registry
- Required Informational Materials
- Limits to Security Deposits/Move-In Fees
- Expanded Application of Just Cause Eviction

Rental Market Stabilization Concepts II

- Housing Ombudsperson
- Tenant Relocation Assistance
- Extended Notice for Rent Increases
- Notice of Sale for Low-Income Housing Units

Rental Market Stabilization Concepts III

- Restrictions on Prospective Tenant Screening
- Reusable, Universal Tenant Screening Report
- Prohibition of Pet Rent
- Low-Interest Loans for Landlord Repairs

Other Ideas Evaluated

- Rent Control – not allowed in Washington
- Economic Displacement Assistance – untested
- Permanent Dispute Resolution – regional level policy

Insights from Peer Communities

- Manage public engagement to minimize acrimony
- Only adopt what you have capacity to enforce
- Administrative hoops that don't change conditions can increase animosity
- Include clear outcome goals with each adopted policy
- Be willing to adapt
- Welcome creative solutions you may not have considered
- Don't make it worse for renters (unintended consequences)

Stakeholder Ideas for Longer-Term Solutions

- Coop Housing
- New Stock through Public Funds
- Public Purchase/Nonprofit Management
- Affordable Housing Development Incentives
- Changes to Land Use, Impact, Design Standards

Schedule

- Stakeholders September-October 2021
- Peer Outreach October
- LUEC Briefing December
- Focus Groups January-February
- Online Survey February-March
- Open Houses TBD
- City Council April 2022 (tentative)

Focus Groups Structure and Discussion

- Welcome
- Process Overview
- Introductions
- Questions:
 - 1: Do you agree that this is a particularly challenging time to be a renter? Yes/No – Why?
 - 2: How long do you think renter conditions will remain challenging: weeks, months, years? Why?
 - 3: Do you think a landlord registry makes sense for Olympia? Why or why not?
 - 4: Are there any solutions you think might cause unintended consequences for renters?
 - 5: Do you think a relocation assistance program would be helpful in Olympia?

Focus Groups Structure and Discussion

- 6: What types of prospective tenant screening solutions do you think might work in Olympia? Are there any screening solutions that give you concern, and what or why?
- 7: Thoughts on: Housing Ombudsperson? Required provision of renter rights and information packets? Permanent dispute resolution process? Low interest loans or grants to landlords for repairs in exchange for rent stability?
- 8: Some cities have placed limits or caps on deposits, move-in fees, late fees and even pet fees. Do you believe Olympia should explore any of these ideas?
- 9: What do you think about extending the notice period for proposed rent increases?
- 10: What might be the pros and cons of expanding Just Cause evictions to all tenancies in Olympia?
- 11: Can you think of other solutions that might work to stabilize or support renters in this market?



Questions?

