Previous TOPO/COPO work to date

Regional and Statewide Efforts

In 2023, the Washington State Legislature adopted an amendment to the Manufactured Home Landlord Tenant Act (MHLTA) to provide manufactured homeowners the opportunity to compete for purchase of their manufactured home community. The policy requires property owners to notify residents of the intended sale and allow residents to submit an offer to purchase.

Resources have been developed to assist manufactured homeowners compete for the opportunity to purchase their communities. The State has set aside funding for acquisition and technical assistance from ROCNW (Resident Owned Communities Northwest). ROCNW is a regional affiliate of ROC USA and is a program of the Northwest Cooperative Development Center (NWCDC). As a community development finance institution (CDFI), NWCDC provides MHC residents who want to purchase their communities pre-development loans for earnest money through ROCNW. Thurston County Regional Housing Council's Opportunity Fund is a local resource for assisting manufactured home communities and other tenants organizing or organized under a cooperative model to purchase or make repairs to their housing.

These policies and financing strategies can serve as a template for a multifamily tenant opportunity to purchase.

Initial conversations about TOPO/COPO are occurring with statewide stakeholders who have an interest in building on the success of manufactured housing conversions to cooperative ownership. Staff is tracking these conversations, convened by the NWCDC. NWCDC has recently released a WA Multi-Family Opportunity To Compete Playbook (attached to this report).

Olympia Affordable Homeownership Study

Olympia City Council allocated funding to contract with a consultant to explore options the City could take to support affordable homeownership. In 2023, the study was initiated. The City contracted Paul Knox and Sam Green (who was at the time a Co-Executive Director of NWCDC). The study examined options and provided recommendations regarding potential policy approaches for a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Ordinance (TOPO).

The City's consultants provided sample policies from other jurisdictions, including a recommended policy from Takoma Park, Maryland, which is a small city with a population of approximately 18,000 that adopted their Tenant Opportunity to Purchase law in 1986. The City's consultants also recommended that the City initially pursue adoption of a tenant opportunity to purchase policy for rental properties with ten or more units. The City's consultants provided information on TOPO considerations as well as a model conversion project in the attached Homeownership Project Final Brief (see pages 5 and 9-14). The model conversion provides estimated costs for a 40-unit property and financing strategies.

February 2026 Olympia Land Use & Environment Committee (LUEC) presentation

Staff presented research on policies enacted in other jurisdictions and included a summary of recommendations based on lessons learned through implementation. This research includes jurisdictions like Washington, D.C. (which has had TOPO in place for over 40 years) and jurisdictions with policies implemented more recently.

Based on review of policies enacted in other jurisdictions, it is likely that financial support for acquisition and technical assistance will be needed for tenants to effectively purchase a property cooperatively. The literature also recommends that financing is nimble, both fast and flexible, to successfully support conversion to tenant ownership. When effectively implemented, TOPO can preserve affordable housing and create long-term affordability, prevent displacement, and improve household stability.

Staff recommended that if the City pursues a TOPO, that staff ensure there are funding sources available to enable these transactions. This funding could include RHC Opportunity Funds, as well as other third-party sources. Staff also recommended that the City support nonprofit capacity-building, if needed, to provide technical assistance for tenants who wish to explore cooperative purchase of their property. As a potential next step, staff suggested outreach to Northwest Cooperative Development Center (NWCDC)/ROCNW to assess capacity and potential funding sources for predevelopment, acquisition, and permanent financing. This research will help determine if there are financing gaps or other support needed to effectively implement a local TOPO.

June 2026 Olympia LUEC Special Meeting with Community Stakeholders

LUEC held a special meeting on June 11, 2026 with local stakeholders. Representatives from the NWCDC/ROCNW, Thurston Housing Land Trust (THLT), and Washington State Department of Commerce Homeownership Unit attended the meeting.

In attendance: Victoria O'Banion (ROCNW), Ann Campbell (Commerce), Rebeca Potasnik (THLT), Robert Vanderpool (LUEC chair), Clark Gilman (LUEC member), Paul Berendt (LUEC member), Tim Smith (Olympia staff), Jacinda Steltjes (Olympia staff), Christa Lenssen (Olympia staff)

Organizational representatives described the work they currently do, their potential role or connection with TOPO/COPO, and capacity to pursue this work. Participants discussed considerations for the City of Olympia to support this work and approaches or policy elements that may be most effective (given the current landscape and system capacity).

Potential Roles in TOPO/COPO

Thurston Housing Land Trust (THLT): owns the underlying land in a community land trust model to make homeownership opportunities more affordable for low to moderate income households; they can be a partner in owning the land to lower costs if tenants decide to convert to condo or cooperative ownership.

Resident Owned Communities Northwest (ROCNW), a program of Northwest Cooperative Development Center (NWCDC): extensive experience helping manufactured home community residents purchase their parks as a cooperative; interested in using skills/experience to provide similar support to multifamily cooperative purchases; has attempted first multifamily tenant cooperative purchase of 12-unit affordable rental property in Spokane recently.

Washington State Department of Commerce: administers State Housing Trust Fund and other grant programs, provides a funding source for acquisition and rehabilitation; administers notice for opportunity to compete to purchase for manufactured home communities.

Financing considerations and current landscape

- Housing Trust Fund requires a 25-year affordability period for housing projects.
- Housing Trust Fund awarded projects have to be up to code and meet Evergreen Development Standards. These are reimbursable expenses, but can be very expensive upfront when preserving/renovating existing housing.
- Commerce can also manage direct appropriations and does for ROCNW.
- ROCNW has a direct appropriation for acquisition of manufactured housing communities that go up for sale. Direct appropriations are preferable to a competitive annual funding source like the Housing Trust Fund because communities go up for sale throughout the year and funding needs to be deployed within 120 days to meet timelines.
- ROCNW estimates about 30-40% subsidy is needed in addition to traditional financing for resident acquisition to keep the housing affordable as a limited equity cooperative. Their recent 12-unit multifamily purchase in Spokane required 50% subsidy.
- Victoria has reached out to WSHFC about debt financing for multifamily tenant acquisition to offer similar low interest loans as available for manufactured housing communities, but this needs to be written into statute to be available.
- Victoria has reached out to banks and CDFIs about debt financing for multifamily tenant acquisition. These institutions have expressed willingness to lend no more than 30% of capital stack because they need proof of concept and are not willing to tolerate high risk.

- Downpayment assistance may be available for eligible homebuyers through state programs.
- Cooperatives are often incorporated as for-profit entities (such as an LLC). Most government funding sources will not provide funds to for-profit entities.
- Local funding sources should not require site control for awards.
- Victoria suggested local funds could be awarded for the concept, but not project-specific. If no properties are purchased, funds could be returned.
- Community land trusts are exempt from property taxes, which can help lower costs.
- RHC's Opportunity Fund could be one potential resource for acquisition.

Input on policy approaches

- Stakeholders agree that if the City implemented a policy, it should include both a tenant and community opportunity to purchase so that qualified organizations can register to be notified when a property goes up for sale.
- Opportunity to compete for purchase for manufactured housing communities allows 70 days to submit an offer, but this is not long enough.
- 12 units minimum, but ideally 16 units and larger works best for cooperative ownership to keep housing affordable to tenant owners.
- Possibility of implementing scattered site community land trust with duplexes or small properties. 1-4 unit properties are underwritten the same as single family residential.
- Could explore the organization referenced in Baltimore that acts as a holding company, which provides property management while converting to tenant ownership over time.
- Opportunity to compete for purchase is not a right of first refusal, but equitable to both the property owners and residents.
- Opportunity to compete for purchase for manufactured housing in Washington has a good example for notification requirements when a property goes up for sale.
- Victoria suggested requiring a limited equity model to receive funding assistance.
- Victoria suggested adding an expiration date for the notice of sale so property owners do not issue notice of sale out of curiosity.
- Chicago's policy only applies to two specific neighborhoods at high risk of displacement, which provides example on how to narrow scope for a pilot.
- Stakeholders suggested that any tenants who are interested in purchasing a property take a first-time homeowner class through Washington Homeownership Resource Center or similar agency so they understand the responsibilities and costs of ownership. Education is needed to understand responsibilities, what being a coop owner entails.

Resource considerations

- Notification management:

    - Commerce has two full-time staff who manage the notification of residents and eligible organizations when a manufactured home community goes up for sale to inform parties of their right to compete to purchase. Even though there is a template with information required in statute for Opportunity to Compete to Purchase, residents often aren't provided the same information as Commerce by the property owner.
    - Stakeholders suggest looking at volume of eligible properties that might be covered under TOPO/COPO and determining if 30% of those properties went up for sale, would staff have capacity to issue notices?
- Resource development and connections:
    - It may be difficult for tenants to access subsidized funding that is rapidly available (not allocated through a competitive annual RFP process) to help keep the property affordable. Thurston County Regional Housing Council's Opportunity Fund is one potential source of funding, however, resources are limited and may not be sufficient.
    - Staff time will likely be required to coordinate resources and connect tenants with assistance.
    - Staff time may be required to perform outreach to lenders, research funding opportunities, etc.
- Gaps in tenant organizing:
    - There are currently no local organizers who could convene tenants to explore interest in cooperative ownership when a property goes up for sale.
- Education and Enforcement:
    - Staff time will be required for outreach and education about any new policies or programs. Any enforcement of a policy requires staff time to investigate and address. The City currently only has two full-time code enforcement officers to address violations of city code.