

Resolution on Seattle Housing Authority redevelopment of the Yesler Terrace Public Housing Project

Whereas the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) is now seeking permits from the City of Seattle to demolish Yesler Terrace, sell it to private developers and replace it with as many as 5,000 units (2/3 market-rate residential rentals or condominiums), retail space, and approximately one half million square feet of offices; and

Whereas SHA has a history of promising to build replacement units but funding them in part with money already committed to low-income housing developments, thus double-counting “new” low-income units; and

Whereas, according to King County’s Housing Benchmarks report, there are some 30,000 households in Seattle with incomes at or below 30% of the area median income (AMI), or about \$23,150 for a 3-person household, competing for (a) SHA’s approximately 4400 low-income public housing units (including the 28-acre, 561-unit Yesler Terrace site), and (b) approximately 310 unsubsidized rentals offered at rents affordable to those very low-income families in King County; and

Whereas the current waiting list for low-income public housing exceeds 11,000 households and the time a family must wait for a subsidized unit is between two and eight years; and

Whereas redevelopment and gentrification in our communities have, through demolition, speculative sale, conversion, and increased rents, depleted Seattle’s stock of very-low-income housing units; and

Whereas Yesler Terrace and the housing, services, and sense of community it provides are needed now more than ever to address a resurgence of poverty and homelessness in our city; and

Therefore, be it resolved that we call on the Seattle City Council to exercise its oversight authority during the SHA permitting process to require the following commitments:

- 1) SHA shall commit to 100% replacement on site of all 561 public housing units being removed and, shall make continually available to households at or below 30% of AMI a minimum of 561 units or 20% of the total constructed on the site, whichever is greater; and
- 2) SHA shall ensure that all units acquired, built or vacated in the surrounding community, in anticipation of relocating Yesler Terrace residents to those units, will either be reopened as low-income units or replaced by SHA at its expense and offered at comparable rental rates; and
- 3) SHA will guarantee that the public housing located in the redeveloped site will include sufficient units of a type and size suitable for larger families, and that the units serving very low-income households will not be moved away from or denied equal access to views, parks, play areas, trees and other amenities offered to higher-income groups.

And be it further resolved that we will forward this resolution to Seattle’s Mayor and City Council and call on them to exercise their clear permitting authority over SHA’s plans and require SHA to comply with the commitments identified in the above three subparagraphs by attaching them as binding conditions to the alley vacations, upzones, and other land-use changes necessary for redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, in order to ensure that SHA continues to fulfill the historic mission for which it was created – to serve the poorest of Seattle’s poor.

Adopted _____ *by* _____

(Initiated by John V. Fox, Coordinator of the Seattle Displacement Coalition and longstanding 43rd District Dem)