



City of Seattle
Office of Housing

July 26, 2010

To: Nick Licata, Chair
Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee

From: Rick Hooper, Acting Director

Subject: Office of Housing presentation on 2010 Race and Social Justice Initiative Work Plans

I am looking forward to sharing the Office of Housing's Race and Social Justice Work Plan with your committee on July 28.

Despite our difficult financial environment and increasing constituent needs, I am pleased that RSJI continues to be a priority, not only for the Mayor, but for City Council as well. Use of the RSJI filter and the Racial Equity Toolkit in making policy, program and budget decisions is more important than ever in our current environment. Eliminating race-based inequities in our city is difficult work, and requires a long-term commitment. Your shared commitment and support is critical to our success.

OH has been working on RSJI since 2004. Although we will be focusing on our 2010 work plan at the Committee meeting, I also wanted to share some of our accomplishments from previous years:

- In 2007, Professor James Gregory of the University of Washington presented a history of racial restrictive covenants on Seattle housing at an OH all-staff training. The presentation was an enlightening session on how racism and discrimination are institutionalized and systematized, and was an opportunity for the office to reflect on how housing policy has deep and resonating impacts in shaping a city.
- In 2009, OH engaged in an office-wide effort to integrate RSJI into everyday work. Using the RSJI Policy Filter as a guide, each OH unit reviewed unit work plans in early 2009 and identified work items that have significant racial and social justice implications. These discussions and identification of significant RSJI work items (and the subsequent inclusion of specific work items in some staff's work plans) allowed for greater accountability to the Race and Social Justice Initiative. One successful outcome was an Office of Housing-specific Fair Housing Training delivered by Office of Civil Rights staff that was planned as a joint effort of the Asset Management and Multi-family Lending units.

The attached table describes our major accomplishments thus far in 2010, as well as some of our challenges. Because of limited time, we won't be able to cover this information in detail at the Committee meeting, but would like to highlight the following:

- **Monthly brown bag discussions of RSJI issues:** An active RSJI Change Team planned monthly brown bag trainings that serve to include all staff in policy discussions around the American prison system, food, geography and environmental justice, and national initiatives such as the Promise Neighborhoods as inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone, and the role that housing policy can play in each of those areas. The OH Change Team is also co-sponsoring an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice with SOCR that will take place on August 19.
- **Who lives in OH funded projects:** In 2009, OH's Asset Management Team produced a report of the demographic make-up of resident buildings in the OH portfolio, including a special look at the 'Housing First' projects. The findings indicate that housing funded by OH is in large part serving people of color in numbers that reflect the racial composition of the homeless population. However, because people of color are over-represented in homelessness, the work to end homelessness continues to be critical as racial justice work. The Asset Management manager presented the findings to the department during an All-Staff meeting, where issues such as disproportionality were discussed.
- **Jail diversion:** OH has been involved in ongoing conversations regarding connections between jail diversion and re-entry programs and supportive housing. As people of color are over-represented in the number of incarcerated individuals, re-entry supportive housing is a solution to ending the cycle of incarceration and homelessness and is important racial and social justice work. In 2009, OH worked with Public Safety departments, the Municipal Court, King County Public Health and Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division to implement a Re-entry Supportive Housing Initiative in Seattle/King County in 2010. One such project, Plymouth Housing Group's Humphrey House, will begin lease-up in the fall of 2010. The project will provide 40 units of supportive housing for individuals who are frequent users of jail from a unique collaboration with Jail Health Services. Office of Housing also just received a grant from the Corporation for Supportive Housing that will fund an evaluation of the Humphrey House project.
- **Building on previous work:** OH anticipates using the remainder of 2010 to focus departmental efforts to ensure that each of our unit is doing inclusive outreach and public engagement. One such effort is the Homeowner Stability Initiative in Southeast Seattle.

I look forward to sharing our work, and strategizing with the Committee about how we can collectively work for racial equity.

Cc: OH Change Team
SOCR – Julie Nelson, Glenn Harris and Jacque Larrainzar